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VIPER TACTICAL



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WE MEET THE GUYS WHO PROUDLY CRAFT SOME OF THE BEST MODERN KNIVES TO COME OUT OF THE USA!

GUNS FOR HIRE?!

ALL TALK: THIS ISSUE WE DISCUSS PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS

HEADCAMS TRIED & TESTED!

MOUNTABLE ACTION CAMERAS UNDER OUR TECH SPOTLIGHT... CAPTURE ALL YOUR MOMENTS!

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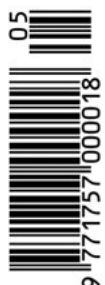
THIS MONTH
WE TALK HIGH
OCTANE SPORTS
IN OUR REGULAR
ADRENALIN
FEATURE

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SURVIVAL TIPS RUGER MIII 22/45 PISTOL FITNESS ESSENTIALS MAYFLOWER TACTICAL

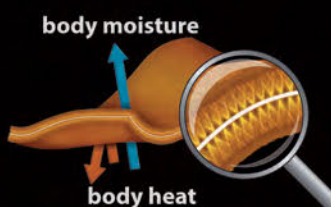
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WELCOME!

Welcome to this month's Raider magazine. Along with the usual mix of interesting, intriguing and informative content this edition brings some changes.

Connor Monaf, who has steered Raider through changing seas for some years now is stepping down from his role as editor to pursue other interests within Ebcon Publishing.

When first launched, Raider was very firmly focused on the military, however as the world changed so has Raider, introducing new ideas and new topics. Connor was instrumental in guiding Raider through these major changes and he has our deepest thanks and appreciation for the tireless work he has put in over these past years.

It is now my job to pick up the reins and to take Raider forward into the future. I have plans and ideas for the magazine but it's always a good idea to learn to walk before you try to run, so Raider as you know it will continue for the time being. My ultimate aim is to build on what Raider has become, and as always I am more than happy to hear from our readers with suggestions and ideas that they think will make Raider an even better and more compelling read.

This month we take a look at the broad range of action cameras now available. Since these emerged onto the market they have completely changed the way we see and record the world, not to mention allowing the terminally foolish to record their mishaps for posterity. If you want to record your activities, from deployment to conquering the world's peaks, which one offers the best mix of quality and value?

In this month's Firepower, Trampas revisits one of the timeless classics of American shooting, the Ruger .22, now in it's Mill version. This little pistol has been at the heart of firearms training and leisure shooting for decades and it's still going strong today. Find out why inside.

With Fitness, Survival, Adrenaline and Deployment Essentials to delve into, not to mention a close look at Mayflower in the 'Loadup' section there is plenty to keep you informed and occupied.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (the more things change, the more they stay the same) as the French are fond of saying. Hopefully this will be true for Raider; yes changes will come but the underlying quality and values will remain the same and I sincerely hope that you will find plenty to interest you for years to come.

STEPHEN



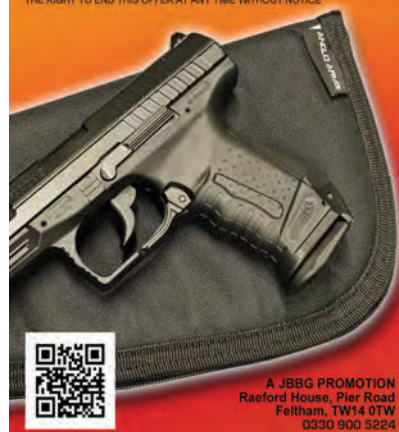
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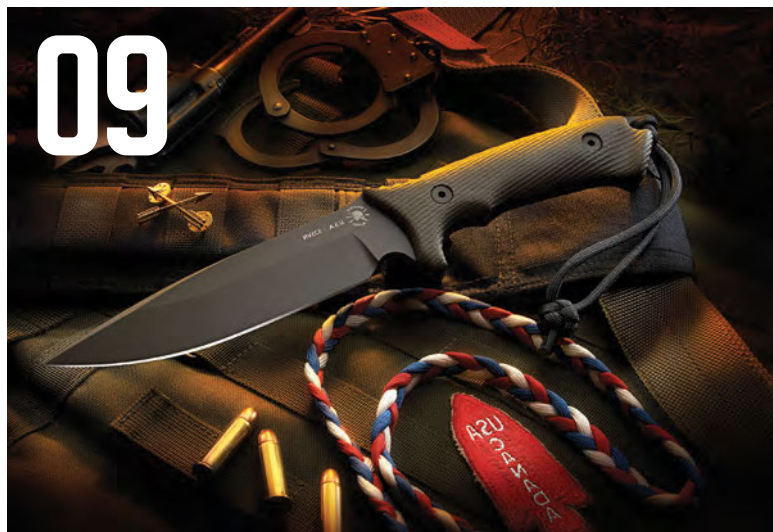
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SUBSCRIBE OR BUY INDIVIDUAL ISSUES OF YOUR FAVOURITE MAGAZINE.





NEWS

WHAT'S HOT FROM AROUND THE WORLD

WELCOME TO THE NEW AND IMPROVED NEWS SECTION! THIS MONTH WE'VE SLIGHTLY CHANGED THE FORMAT OF NEWS; NOW BRINGING YOU THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST IN NEW GEAR, ALONG WITH ANY NEWS THAT HAS HIT THE TACTICAL GEAR MARKET... DON'T FORGET, YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST!

"SAME MISSION... NEW HARDWARE"



HALEY STRATEGIC D3CR - HEAVY

New from Haley Strategic is the welcome re-working of the D3CR rig to accommodate the increasingly popular larger calibres.

The D3CR re-introduced the concept of lightweight load carrying equipment that could be worn alone or in conjunction with various types of body armour.

The D3CR-H addresses the same mission as the original D3CR, but has been slightly redesigned to support .308 platforms. Optimized for work in urban, vehicle, rural and other confined settings, the Disruptive Environment Chest Rig was built to be worn as a stand alone system with a detachable H-harness or clipped into a armour platform equipped with a quick release system.

The rig intentionally does not include a radio or dedicated full size medical pouch so no matter the posture, essentials such as communications and medical kits can remain on the end user at all times.

The D3CR-H is also compatible with the Haley Strategic D3 Expansion System allowing the end user to add features including the holster wedge or multi-mission hanger pouch.

The rifle magazine pouches accept almost any .308 magazine. The Multi-Mission Pouches accept 1911, Glock, Sig, M&P, XD and other standard double or single stack pistol magazines, as well as many handheld lights and multi-tools.

- 4x .308 Magazine Pouches with Hypalon® magazine retention tabs. Pouches support SR25, SCAR, FAL, AR10, M14, Lancer Systems, PMAG LR and more...
- 2x Multi-Mission Pouches with Hypalon magazine retention tabs. Fits standard double and single stack pistol magazines as well as other equipment including flashlights and multi-tools.

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NINJA GNOME GARDEN SECURITY?!

Yes, you read that correctly. At Raider we do get odd press releases sometimes and since a little levity is good for the soul....

"Blinding security lights, half a dozen CCTV cameras, illegally-sourced land mines, an unforgiving barbed-wire fence and a pack of bloodthirsty hounds. All surplus to requirements when your garden contains...the Ninja Gnome.

Protect your plants and patio safe from unwanted intruders and garden pests with this deadly assassin. Dressed from head to toe in black and wielding a samurai sword; he despatches slugs, squirrels and burglars with ruthless feudal Japanese efficiency.



SORD USA STORMTROOPER HAND WARMER!

Ah, this warms the cockles of our hearts, or more specifically our hands. After a cold, dry winter here in the UK, this could be just the ticket!

SORD USA has now introduced the Stormtrooper Hand Warmer. This cold weather mission specific product has been developed and tested over the course of three years in various conditions, altitudes, and terrains. The final product integrates the lightweight LiteLok fabric for MultiCam and Coyote versions, while the Kryptek Yeti option utilizes 500D Cordura. Two or three layers (Yeti option) of 40 GSM Prima Loft insulation provide extreme warmth.

STORMTROOPER IN MULTICAM

The Stormtrooper is equipped with two internal pockets allow you to secure heater packs to keep everything nice and toasty. An external zip pocket allows you to keep some quick grab small items close at hand. A blow out section provides additional room for storage and adjustable wrist cuffs allow you to customer fit to your hands. Elastic straps allow you to secure the Stormkeeper when not in use.

Compatible with MOLLE, Belt Loops, and D Rings. The SORD USA Stormtrooper will soon be available at PredatorArmament.com



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SPARTAN BLADES

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE COMBAT KNIFE HAS BEEN A CRITICAL TOOL A WARRIOR'S ARMAMENT. PREDATING FIREARMS, BOWS AND EVEN SPEARS, A GOOD BLADE HAS AND ALWAYS WILL AID THE SURVIVAL OF MANKIND WORLDWIDE. IN THE OLD DAYS THESE KNIVES WERE MADE BY CRAFTSMEN, WHO POURED THEIR SWEAT AND SOUL INTO EACH BLADE TO ENSURE ITS MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE WHEN NEEDED MOST. SADLY THOSE DAYS HAVE FADED IN THE SHADOW OF MASS PRODUCTION AND COST EFFECTIVENESS LEAVING POORER QUALITY EQUIPMENT IN THE HANDS OF MODERN DAY WARRIORS, WHO STILL HAVE THE SAME REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS OF A GOOD BLADE. THANKFULLY, A FEW COMPANIES OUT THERE STILL FEEL THE OLD WAYS ARE THE BEST WAYS AND STRIVE TO COMBINE MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND STEEL WITH CRAFTSMANSHIP AND EXPERIENCE TO GIVE THE SOLDIER OR OUTDOORSMAN ALIKE A QUALITY PRODUCT THEY CAN DEPEND THEIR LIFE ON IF NEED BE. IN MY RECENT TRAVELS, I AM PROUD TO SAY, I FOUND VETERAN OWNED, SPARTAN BLADES TO BE ONE SUCH COMPANY.

Trampas.



NESTLED IN THE SLEEPY LITTLE NORTH CAROLINA TOWN OF SOUTHERN PINES, ONE WOULD BE ABLE TO FIND THE HEADQUARTERS OF SPARTAN BLADES, LLC IN THEIR NEW FACILITY. JUST A STONE THROW AWAY IS THE U.S. ARMY BASE FORT BRAGG (WELL KNOWN FOR BEING THE HOME OF THE U.S. SPECIAL FORCES "GREEN BERETS") SPARTAN BLADES IS IN A WAY, A PRODUCT OF UNITED STATES' FINEST WARRIORS AND THEIR TRAINING. OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE COMPANY HAS GROWN BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS, MAKING A SOLID NAME FOR THEMSELVES AS QUALITY KNIFE MAKERS AND BECOMING THE FAVORITE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUPS WORLDWIDE. BACK IN OCTOBER OF 2014, I FOUND MYSELF TRAVELING THROUGH NORTH CAROLINA AND DECIDED TO GIVE SPARTAN BLADES A CALL AND SET UP AN APPOINTMENT TO CHECK OUT THEIR WORK IN PERSON.



THE MEN BEHIND THE BLADES

Upon my arrival at the Southern Pines facility, I was greeted through the secured doors by the co-founder, Curtis Iovito. As I entered, we walked through an impressive show room of glass cases and bright lights displaying samples of their work in all their glory. Atop a tall display case to the left sat a replica of a historic Spartan helmet similar to the company logo. Directly ahead, a wooden sign with a distressed painted American flag, giving one the sense of pride in country and the warrior spirit. As Curtis and I began to talk, he was kind enough to give me the grand tour of the building they recently moved into mere months ago. Through the assembly room and into the media blast area, I was impressed with how clean and professional the entire building was despite the gritty blue collar work that is performed within its walls. As we made our way through a heavy secured area not to be mentioned in detail, we routed back to the main office where I was introduced to Curtis' partner and co-founder, Mark Carey. Both men presented themselves in a very friendly and knowledgeable manner discussing what went into the making of a Spartan Blades knife.

With the company slogan, "Knives with Intent", you only need one look at their designs to tell they are purpose built for folks who know how to use a good blade. In every knife I saw, they each encompassed details that only a seasoned warrior would think of. As I got to know both Curtis and Mark, I learned there was over 40 years of military experience between them, including stints as Army Special Forces snipers. Curtis and Mark started their after retirement venture with dreams of developing the ultimate sniper rifle using new age materials and precision manufacturing but found themselves starting

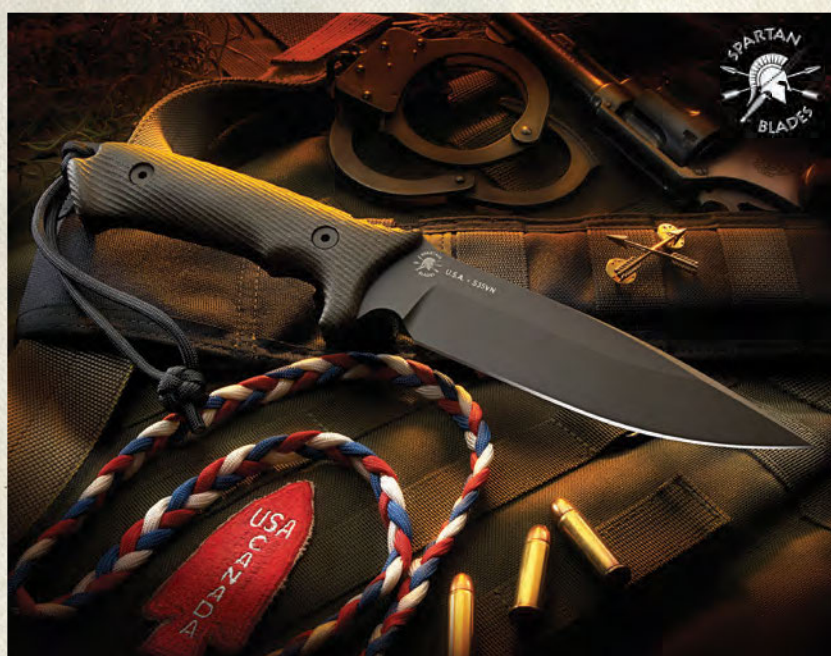
at square one with the most basic of tools first, the knife. As they ventured from looking at the firearms production market to the blade community in February of 2008, Curtis and Mark were impressed with how open and welcoming knife makers were with helping them turn their designs into reality. Curtis Iovito had already developed his interest in making knives during his time serving in the US Special Forces creating high quality blades for buddies in the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne). Teaming up with Mark Carey and his battle proven design ideas, Spartan Blades was a perfect match up in ideas and vision.

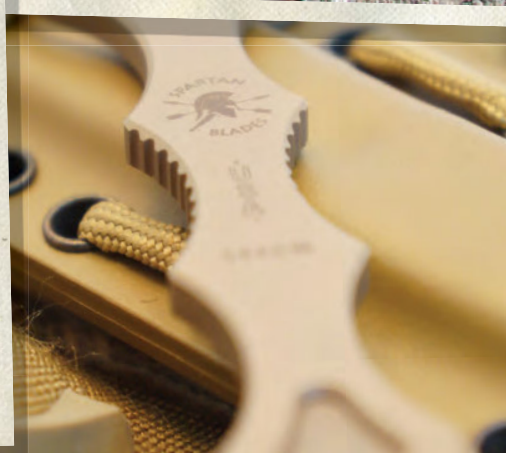




SPARTAN TOUGH!

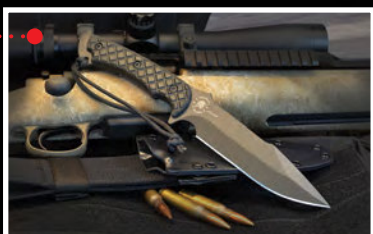
With each blade made of Crucible S35VN Steel, they are double deep cryogenically heat treated and tempered for practically unmatched hardness and durability. Additionally, Spartan Blades uses a process called pressure tempering whereby all the blades are tempered while under hydraulic pressure in order to assure straightness. The metal is conditioned to be much more durable than a standard production knife. Spartan Blades offers almost all their knives in either black or flat dark earth using PVD (Physical Vapor Deposition) coating treatment before matching them up with very precise fitted sure grip micarta handles. These grips allow for a sure purchase on the knife in even the wettest environments. The appearances of all the Spartan Blades are clean, professional and intimidating. I enjoyed the afternoon handling samples of their work and admiring how well balanced each design was regardless of size or intended use. Not to go into too much detail, I found a few models that really stood out in the Spartan Blades inventory and I have been fortunate enough to work with since my trip to visit their shop.





THE HORKOS

This knife's design has the honor of having been commissioned by the Combat Weapons Team at the United States Military Academy in West Point. The Horkos was built from the ground up as a Combat / Utility fixed "do all" blade. The well balanced knife has an easy handling drop point blade measuring almost a full 6 inches and comes in at just under 11 inches in overall length. The wide 3/16 inch spine offers great strength and rigidity while striking the top of the blade with a blunt object (baton method) through a thick piece of wood for a kindling to make a fire. Although commonly known as the "West Point Knife", it is a great tool for the combat soldier and bushcraft woodsman alike.



THE SPARTAN: GEORGE V-14 DAGGER

The name says it all, this fast handling, perfectly balanced fixed blade has one with job, WIN! Designed in collaboration with Spartan Blades and prolific knife maker, Les George, it harkens of the days of the OSS and the Commando dagger of old. The double sided, razor sharp 6 3/4 inch blade is intimidating in the 11 1/2 inch overall length. Slash and pierce deep are the goals of a knife that certainly earns the right to wear the Spartan emblem.



THE CQB TOOL

When all hell breaks loose and the enemy is on top of you in a struggle for your life, the large combat knife still in its sheath on your hip or strapped to your gear does NO GOOD! The CQB Tool is specifically designed to be quietly tucked away behind other items out of sight with the easy to deploy loop ever at the ready to be grabbed and put to use. Its sole design purpose is for the Police Officer, soldier, or innocent civilian being attacked to get the dirt bag OFF OF YOU!! With an optional aluminum training version that is blunt tipped and unsharpened, one can train to put the tool to great use in grappling situations before transitioning to a primary weapon.





AWARD WINNING

As with all of our proud servicemen and women, the military work ethic is second to none and this drive to succeed is continued to this day inside Curtis Iovito and Mark Carey. These two guys aren't your typical office based CEOs, they are in the shop grinding new blades for large orders, carefully testing out new designs and most impressively, on the road weeks at a time hitting all the major industry shows from SHOT SHOW in Las Vegas, Nevada, to IWA in Nuremburg, Germany and right back to the States for a huge Blade Show in Atlanta, Georgia. I feel fortunate to have caught them standing still long enough to check out there impressive home office. Fortunately, hard work pays off in the end and has a platform to be well recognized. For their efforts, Spartan Blades have captured several important industry awards such as the Blade Show 2010 and 2014 Collaboration of the Year Awards and the 2014 Most Innovative American made Knife of the Year Award. Ask either one of these humble men and they will quickly tell you; the best reward for Spartan Blades is in knowing their knives are in the capable hands of the American soldier fighting for God and country, to make it home to their loved ones safely.

THE FUTURE

According to co-founder Curtis Iovito, Spartan Blades is busier than ever with addition of two new folder designs ready to go into production just in time for the upcoming 2015 Industry Blade Show in Atlanta, Georgia. Additionally, Curtis recently announced Spartan Blades has been commissioned to manufacture the regimental knife for an element of the Canadian Special Operations Community. This venture will only extend the growing number of operators worldwide who depend on their well-built knives.

While I still expect to later in the future see one of the world's top sniper rifles come from this

company, these warriors are all but retired and have certainly become a force in the knife market. From my own personal experiences with a couple of recent acquisitions from Spartan Blades, I can honestly say these knives are not just "tacti-cool", these guys are for real! With an impressive resume of training, deployments, honors and experience, Spartan Blades customers ultimately are the ones who benefit in purchasing knives designed to be able to endure any harsh situation encountered around the globe. Check out their great line of knives and gear, at...

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.22 PLINKING

FIREP



RUGER

Mark III 22/45 PISTOL

TRADITION HAS ALWAYS HELD A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE WORLDWIDE SHOOTING INDUSTRY. IN THE UNITED STATES, TRADITION HAS HELPED THE IMMORTAL 1911 SEMI-AUTO PISTOL AND AR15 RIFLE CONTINUE TO TOP SALES YEAR AFTER YEAR OVER NEW DESIGNS AND CONCEPTS. MANUFACTURERS SUCH AS COLT, SPRINGFIELD, AND SMITH & WESSON HAVE MANAGED TO RULE THE INDUSTRY AND ENDURE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE US ECONOMY. IN A TIME WHERE COMPANIES HAVE HAD TO MERGE OR MOVE OVERSEAS TO STAY IN EXISTENCE, ONE COMPANY HAS HELD ITS OWN AMONG THE GIANTS OF THE INDUSTRY, STURM, RUGER & COMPANY. INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING THE FORMAT SET BY SOME OF THE UNITED STATES OLDEST FIREARMS MANUFACTURERS, RUGER FIREARMS HAVE MANAGED TO ENDURE BY DOING THINGS THEIR OWN WAY. THIS ARTICLE IS A LOOK AT THE COMPANY'S LATEST VERSION OF ITS FLAGSHIP FIREARM, THE RUGER .22 CALIBER SEMI-AUTO PISTOL NOW LABELED THE MARK III.

TODAY'S RUGER

Over the years, Bill Ruger SR's design slowly evolved giving shooters more of what they wanted in a .22 caliber sporting pistol while still retaining its original form, balance and natural point of aim. With various barrel lengths, barrel sizes and weights, Sturm, Ruger & Co. managed to bring about three noted evolutions or "generations" of its founding pistol. The current generation titled the Mark III or MIII for short, is currently offered in a traditional target set up with high angled grip and the more popular tactical set up known as the 22/45. While at first you would not consider the .22 LR platform a tactical firearm, there are many aspects of training with the 22/45 which carry over to a shooter's duty or carry weapon.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a significant trend in using the .22 caliber platform as a training supplement for larger caliber weapons for a number of reasons. Largely due to the ever increasing cost of large caliber ammunition and the lack of proper training facilities, the 22LR platform allows a shooter more "trigger time" practicing basic the basic universal fundamentals of sight picture, sight alignment and trigger control for less cost. By substituting .22 caliber firearms, similar in shape or mechanics as the larger counterpart, one can simply

train in a back yard environment if need be. With the addition of a proper suppressor, your neighbors will never even know!

NEW FOR 2015

Fresh from the gravel Nevada ranges of SHOT SHOW 2015, the Sturm, Ruger & Company presents a new take on their excellent line of Mark III 22/45 pistols, the 22/45 LITE. As with any of this series, the frame is designed to loosely feel and resemble a standard 1911 grip to help shooters retain proper mechanics when transitioning to their favorite Kimber, Ruger or Colt .45 cal. Aside from the new eye catching blue anodized finish, this version of the MIII has a few differences for the new year.

In order to make the MIII more comfortable than its standard all steel constructed models to carry all day on your hip or in a back pack, Ruger decided to cut weight by creating the frame of the pistol out of high strength Zytel polymer. This allows for the same feel as the traditional 22/45 with a third less weight. Next, to cut even more weight, the entire upper receiver of this pistol is aluminum with a steel bolt and 4.4 inch threaded barrel housed inside. Once designers got the pistol to the desired weight, Ruger made a minor improvement to the controls by extending the bolt

stop lever slightly more from the frame. Traditionally the bolt stop required a shooter to pull back on the bolt by the rear cocking serrations, while depressing the lever to allow the bolt to go forward on an empty chamber. With the new 22/45 LITE version, one simply depresses the bolt stop lever downward and forward the bolt goes!

AT FIRST GLANCE

About week after my wife and I arrived home from SHOT SHOW, I got a call from Cody at my local gun shop, Second Amendment Outfitters, advising me there was a very cool looking gun from Ruger that had just arrived with my name on it marked for test and evaluation. Upon my arrival at the shop, a couple of the boys working the morning shift already had the MIII out of its plain white Ruger marked box admiring it. Having seen a preview of the pistol earlier in Las Vegas during SHOT SHOW Media Day, I was able to tell the guys a little about what makes the new design special. One of the most noticeable features when holding the pistol in your hand is the balance. It seemed a bit further towards the hand than most of the 22/45 pistols I have owned. After unscrewing the thread protector on the end of the barrel, I attached my Outback II suppressor



OVER



PLINKING POWER

Ruger states the MSRP on the 22/45 LITE is approximately \$515, this will more than likely equate to around \$450 at the local gun shop. Here in the States, this price roughly equates to a good used Glock, but I can promise, you won't be able to have near as much fun shooting all day without breaking the bank as you can with the Ruger MIII.

from Gemtech and the balance moved perfectly to the center where it feels natural when shooting. The whole gun seemed to be specifically designed for shooting with a suppressor, from it's taller than normal iron sights to see over the suppressor housing to the accessory rail for mounting a red dot optic for greater impact deviance adjustment.

ON THE RANGE

Never one to pass up a good opportunity to send some rounds down range, I invited the shop guys to take a break and join me on their indoor range. As I loaded up the two supplied 10 round magazines that accompanied the pistol, I decided to go with CCI's SUPPRESSOR .22 LR ammunition. I fired the first 5 rounds and noticed it seemed to be shooting slightly low. As far as sound, the Gemtech / Ruger combo was quiet as a church mouse with only the sound of the bolt in motion during recoil. I followed up with the remaining 5 rounds with less overall drop in shot group placement. With a fresh magazine inserted, I slow fired 10 rounds in secession with better results than before. The trigger seemed to a bit gritty at first until I got used to it. Overall trigger travel is minimum with a rough measurement of 1/4 inch of take up and breaking at a mere 1/16 of an inch afterwards.

While it only took a few magazines of shooting to get properly adjusted to the trigger pull, some shooters may opt for a few aftermarket replacement products from trusted companies like Volquartsen Custom. With their current MIII trigger kits, a mild 5.2lb trigger pull and minimum over travel can be knocked down to almost zero take up, 2.5lbs of trigger pull and zero over travel for under \$100 US.

The following day, my wife, Candace and I decided to use the new Ruger pistol along with its Gemtech suppressor for a Valentine's Day fundraiser event presented by her local chapter of the not-for-profit women's shooting organization, The Well Armed

Woman. Due to it being the day of love, the ladies group offered couples to pay a fee to step into the range and shoot the Ruger 22/45 LITE at a special target consisting of various shaped hearts, each with their own point value with the goal of winning prizes for the top shooting couple. As each couple exited the range from their time spent with the new Ruger pistol, I polled both men and women on their thoughts about the pistol. Everyone gave the little pistol glowing reviews harping on the extreme lack of recoil, its amazing accuracy, the attractive blue finish and even just its overall "cool factor"!

OPTICS: VORTEX

While the adjustable rear sight of the Ruger 22/45 LITE's iron sights are easy to use and very durable, the addition of the Picatinny Rail was nice to see for this year's model. It seems the growing trend among sporting pistols these days is to transition from the two point sighting system to the singular red dot of a small optic. These typically make for faster sight acquisition, which leads to getting on target faster and enhancing follow up shots. Upgrading to a red dot optic was an easy choice for me. I was fortunate enough to also have a test model of the excellent Razor mini red dot sight from Vortex Optics. As with all of their Razor series of scopes, this mini red dot is second to none in my opinion. At 3 MOA, the dot is clear, bright and small enough to bull's-eye the smallest of targets while still catching the eye for fast snap shots. With unlimited eye relief, and completely parallax free, the whole unit is only 1.83 inches in length and weighing right at 1.4 ounces, yet tough as nails. It has been my experience; this small optic has been durable enough to be put to service atop combat shotguns with no problem. Retailing for just under \$500 US, it's not the cheapest option on the market, but certainly not a purchase you will ever regret making.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Through the years, I have been fortunate enough to have reviewed dozens of .22 LR rifles and pistols and probably owned three times more than that. After spending a few weeks with the new Ruger MIII 22/45 LITE, I can honestly say this will be my next firearm purchase along with an aftermarket Volquartsen trigger kit. The pistol's performance with and without the suppressor attached was relatively the exact same minus the noise of course, but since sending a few hundred rounds down range with the 22/45 along with the Gemtech, shooting without it is similar to wearing a tuxedo without a tie. If you're going to do it, go all out!

While I do occasionally use the .22 platform for training, I see the Ruger/Gemtech combination for far more useful purposes of ridding my back yard of pesky raccoons and opossums as well as putting it to good use during a leisurely stroll in the woods to put yummy little squirrels on the dinner table. As for the distant future for this pistol, it will be an excellent training tool to assist in teaching my daughter the same basic shooting skills passed along to me when I was the ripe old age of six. The lack of noise and recoil will help instill focus and enjoyment not offered in the traditional small arms.

PRICE

As for price, Ruger states the MSRP on the 22/45 LITE is approximately \$515, this will more than likely equate to around \$450. Here in the States, this price roughly equates to a good used Glock, but I can promise, you won't have near as much fun shooting all day without breaking the bank as you can with the new Ruger MIII. For more on the Ruger 22/45 LITE visit www.ruger.com. While you're at it, check out the great line of optics from Vortex at www.vortexoptics.com.



MISSION PACK

Capacity: 38.5 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 52 x 24 x 32 cm

Internal hydration sleeve
Ventex system back panel
Adjustable hip pad/harness
Padded shoulder straps and sternum strap with QR buckles
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings
Multiple compression straps
Hydration/coms outlet
Side carry handle
2 x V-Lock
1 x D-Lock

SRP £84.95



RANGER PACK

Capacity: 36.5 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 46 x 33 x 26 cm

Multiple compression straps
4 point, Ventex system back panel
Padded shoulder straps and sternum strap with QR buckles
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings
Side carry handle
Internal hydration sleeve
Internal retaining straps/bungees
Felt lined exterior utility pouches
Hydration/coms outlet
2 x Velcro ID panels
2 x V-Lock
1 x D-Lock

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RECON EXTRA PACK

Capacity: 20 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 45 x 22 x 20 cm

Internal hydration sleeve
Internal retaining straps/bungees
Felt lined exterior utility pouches
Hydration/coms outlet
Multiple compression straps
4 point, Ventex system back panel
Padded shoulder straps and sternum strap with QR buckles
Grab carry handle
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings
2 x Velcro ID panels, 2 x V-Lock, 1 x D-Lock

SRP £54.95



MIDI PACK

Capacity: 22 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 43 x 23 x 26 cm

Internal hydration sleeve
Padded shoulder straps and sternum strap with QR buckles
2 x side stow pouches
Internal Nylon utility sleeves
Mesh back
Compression straps
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings
2 x V-Lock
1 x D-Lock

SRP £45.00



MINI MODULAR PACK

Capacity: 19.5 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 42 x 23 x 34 cm

Mesh helmet hammock located on front with compression straps for adjustment
Internal hydration sleeve
2 x External side pouches
Hydration/coms outlet
Padded shoulder straps and sternum strap with QR buckles
Multiple compression straps
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings
Compatible with Plate Carrier
1 x Large Velcro ID panel
2 x V-Lock, 1 x D-Lock

SRP £45.00



ONE DAY MODULAR PACK

Capacity: 13.5 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 19 x 20 x 43 cm

Hydration/coms outlet
Multiple compression straps
Internal mesh pocket to accommodate hydration bladder
Shoulder straps with QR buckles
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings
Compatible with Plate Carrier
1 x Large Velcro ID panels.
2 x V-Lock
1 x D-Lock

SRP £26.50



SHOULDER PACK

Capacity: 10 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 31 x 20 x 16 cm

Retaining straps/bungees
Exterior utility pouches.
Mesh back panel.
Shoulder straps with QR buckle.
MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior pouches including D-Rings.
2 x Velcro ID panels.
2 x V-Lock
1 x D-Lock

SRP £29.95



SPECIAL OPS POUCH

Capacity: 5.5 litres (approx)
Material: 600D Cordura
Colours: V-Cam, Coyote, Green, Black
Dimensions: 20 x 15 x 18 cm

MOLLE webbing attachments located on exterior front
External mag/phone pouch
Sectional internals
Fold out compartment
Removable shoulder carry strap
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2 x V-Lock, 1 x D-Lock

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PREPARATION 101 SURVIVAL CLOTHING

UNLESS YOU ARE VERY, VERY UNLUCKY, OR YOU'RE ED STAFFORD ON THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL PROGRAMME "NAKED AND MAROONED" YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO FIND YOURSELF IN A SURVIVAL SITUATION WITHOUT YOUR CLOTHES. THE OLD ADAGE HAS IT THAT "CLOTHES MAKETH THE MAN", AND THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THE WILDERNESS. ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT YOU WON'T BE CARRYING A COMPLETE TECHNICAL WARDROBE ON YOUR BACK WHAT SHOULD YOU BE WEARING TO MAXIMISE YOUR COMFORT AND CHANCES OF SURVIVAL?

The whole area of technical clothing is huge and diverse and there is almost literally a garment for every situation. Prices range from astonishingly reasonable to eye-wateringly expensive and all point in between. As Stafford demonstrated, you can survive starting from a point of complete undress, but neither we, nor we suspect, he, would recommend that. It is also an absolute truism that you do not need super-advanced technical clothing with all the latest improvements to be comfortable in the wilds. Anyone familiar with England's Lake District will have come across some hardy local out striding the Fells resplendent in wellies and a Barbour jacket. What is also true however is that a well thought out wardrobe for the great outdoors will enhance your time outside and greatly

improve your prospects should something go awry.

A good friend of ours once pointed out that any idiot can get cold and wet, this while he was unloading a pile of camping gear and sleeping bags. He's right and there is no kudos to be gained from cutting corners and trusting to luck and your robust constitution to see you through. If you are going to venture outside, especially into the great outdoors, you should dress for the occasion. Since we have to start somewhere, we'll start with this suggestion; military kit is not the best low-cost option available. There are a number of reasons for that but a couple will suffice for illustration. Military gear is Government sourced and that usually means the lowest bidder. Some of it is excellent, but quite a lot of it is very far from that. It tends to be nicely camouflaged which is great if you want to hide from people, not so handy if in fact you want to be seen. It is also heavy compared to what is available commercially and if you are travelling under your own power, every pound counts.

Outdoors, get colourful. If you are in an area of the world where you might encounter predators remember that they are colour blind and movement attracts their attention far more than tones and hues. On the other hand, human beings spot colours quite easily so if your aim is to see and be seen, embrace your flamboyant side. Manufacturers will help you here as they just love bright colours for their clothing ranges. You will find something a bit more muted, but they are intended for those who want to wear The North Face around town.

You are going to be wearing what you will be surviving in. Anything in sacks or other forms of carrying kit can be dropped or lost. This isn't ideal since unlike your survival kit or belt mounted tool it's simply not practical to carry spare clothes on

your belt. Well... it is possible, to a limited extent. A good waterproof shell will usually allow itself to be rolled up pretty small, and Snuggpak's 'Sleeka' insulated jacket was designed to provide insulation in a package that would fit into a soldier's pouch. For a waterproof and wind-proof shell you could start with something as simple and affordable as the Karrimor Sierra jacket or head through The North Face and their Oroshi jacket with maybe a nod to Berghaus' Ulvetanna which is somewhere north of £400. There is no doubt you get what you pay for but a good top layer is vital. It can provide a waterproof shell, and more important than that protect you from winds which can strip you of body heat so quickly that by the time you realise what's happening it can be too late.

We're not fans of waterproof trousers here at Raider, it's not that we're hard and enjoy wet legs, we don't, but except for really extreme conditions we feel that the compromise between water-resistance and comfort is not in favour of the over-trousers. Much better we feel to use trousers which are designed to be hard-wearing and fast drying as most modern walking and outdoors trousers are. Famous names like Craghopper leap to the fore here for sheer performance and value for money. Their lined winter trousers are a must-have for the colder months in temperate climes while their classic Kiwi range and their slightly more relaxed Nosilife range are perennial favourites. There are other manufacturers out there, Berghaus and The North Face both have offerings as do more specialised manufacturers like Montane. For performance versus price though Craghoppers are hard to beat. Regardless of brand, we would counsel against carrying too much in those cargo pockets. Having your survival tin and a multitool banging against your leg becomes very irritating very quickly!



THERE IS NO DOUBT YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR BUT A GOOD TOP LAYER IS VITAL. IT CAN PROVIDE A WATERPROOF SHELL, AND MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT PROTECT YOU FROM WINDS WHICH CAN STRIP YOU OF BODY HEAT SO QUICKLY THAT BY THE TIME YOU REALISE WHAT'S HAPPENING IT CAN BE TOO LATE.



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We have already covered boots in one of the “Adrenaline” articles so we won't revisit that extensive subject here. Base and mid-layers on the other hand are worth discussing as these are what you are most likely to be wearing at any given point.

These days your base-layers are far more likely to be synthetic than natural, although there is still a place for Merino wool in extreme conditions. You need your base layer to trap a thin layer of warm air around your core whilst at the same time allowing perspiration to wick through and evaporate. Leaders in this field will be found in the rangers from Helly Hansen, Rab, Salomon – all the usual suspects in fact. Cut will vary and since you want these reasonably snug fitting it worth trying before you buy. All will dry quickly either on your body or hanging from a tree branch. Regardless of maker they are usually available as either long or short sleeved – we would go with long sleeves, they offer more protection and unlike short sleeves, you can always roll them up if needs be.

Mid layers are more fun. You're looking for similar properties to base layers but a little more – more insulation, more wind-proofing and more water repellency. Leaders in this field will be found from Buffalo and Snugpak with their

Buffalo Mountain shirt and Pile Shirt respectively. Both these garments feature an over-the-head design, extensive venting to control temperature, hard-wearing, water repellent outer layer and a general air of being able to cope with anything nature throws at them.

A good hat and gloves are worthwhile additions, fleece watch caps are cheap (around £7.00) and remarkably efficient. You may well not need them during the day but once the sun goes down, temperatures can plummet and you'll be glad of the extra top cover. A good pair of lightweight wind-proof and water-proof gloves are a good addition to this list. Practicality suggest something suitable for three-season use unless you know, or at least suspect, you are going to find yourself in arctic conditions. As with everything else the ability to retain heat even when wet is invaluable – look at Rab, SealSkinz and Berghaus for starters, but there are literally hundreds of options out there.

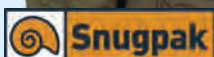
If this is all beginning to sound a bit like a “how to equip yourself for trekking” then it's hardly surprising. The demands are almost identical and the solutions likewise. Layers win, as they maximise your clothing flexibility. Frankly feature like anti-microbial treatments are of less importance, if you're alone there is no one to

care how good or bad you smell, and if you've survived an ordeal and made it back to safety, neither will you! Efficiency and toughness are key, and for this reason there are areas where it will probably reward you handsomely to buy well, buy once. Items like fleeces, should you use them as a mid layer, don't need to be particularly expensive as we believe there is a fairly rapid law of diminishing returns as the price increases. Investing £100 or so on Snugpak pile shirt or a Buffalo on the other hand will get you a piece of equipment that will see you through many miles and adventures and probably many years of hard use. Similarly investing in a quality waterproof outer shell is a sensible decision if you expect to encounter inclement weather or high winds. We would stop short or suggesting you use the shell as a makeshift shelter but it will do that for your body and combined with the sort of simple shelters we discussed recently in “Survival” will go a very long way to keeping you alive and well in all but the most cataclysmic conditions.

The great thing about getting this correct is that you will have it with you at all times, simply because you'll be wearing it with the possible exception of hat and gloves. These are ideal occupants of those cargo pockets we mentioned earlier, if anything happens they'll still be with you.

As ever there is a very healthy dose of common sense involved in all of this and working out what you need isn't rocket science. Deciding on which products get your hard-earned cash is likely to be the really hard part and if you are anything like us you'll go through several variants, this area is as prone to wonder-products and fads as any other area of human endeavour. Like your survival kit however once you know what works and you have acquired what you need getting ready to head out becomes easy! Here are a few jacket options that have performed above and beyond all expectations and found a permanent home in our gear locker.

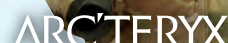
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£180 **ARC'TERYX**
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THE ANTI-BOTTLE

HYDRATION IS KEY WHEN IT COMES TO PARTICIPATING IN A RANGE OF SPORTING EVENTS, AND HAVING THE CORRECT EQUIPMENT TO KEEP YOURSELF TOPPED UP WITH WATER CONSTANTLY IS A HUGE MUST IN OUR EYES. NOW WHILST CARRYING A CONVENTIONAL BOTTLE FOR SOME EVENTS CAN BE TRICKY, CALIFORNIAN-BASED VAPUR MAY JUST HAVE THE SOLUTION FOR YOU.

VAPUR MISSION

California-based Vapur, Inc. started in 2009 as a big idea with a simple solution. With unwelcome waste creeping into the social conscious and light shed on the ugly aftereffects of plastic, avid outdoorsmen, David Czerwinski, Brent Reinke and Jason Carignan set out to find an answer.

This team, led by a commitment to design, innovation and eco-responsibility, was on a mission to make hydration incomparably portable and disposable bottles obsolete. September of that founding year, Vapur launched its game changing product: the Vapur Anti-Bottle.

About 87% lighter than typical rigid bottles, the slim, flexible Anti-Bottle only packs water weight. It also uses less energy to make and transport than rigid bottles, so not only is the Anti-Bottle light on your load, its environmental impact is also pretty "lite." Vapur now has multiple product lines of Anti-Bottles, ranging from the highly-technical Element to the Quencher line for kids.

What began as a passion-filled hobby of three individuals ended up sparking a water revolution and international foldable bottle trend. Now as the leading designer, marketer and distributor of reusable, handheld, collapsible hydration products, Vapur's Anti-Bottles have been adopted by athletes, celebrities, activists and families alike.

Proudly manufactured in the United States, Vapur Anti-Bottles are durable, freezable, dishwasher safe and BPA-free.

Now drink up and as always, "Live Flexible."

THE ANTI - BOTTLE

We've been hands on with the Vapur range for about two weeks now, and so far we have nothing but praise for the 'Anti-Bottle'. Vapur very kindly sent us two of their 'anti-bottles' - the smaller Shades variant as well as the larger Element.

But before we go any further, what exactly is Vapur's 'Anti-Bottle'? Simply put, the Anti-Bottle is a reusable water bottle designed to stand when full and can be rolled, folded or flattened when empty, making it easy to use and carry on any adventure. Unlike bulky, rigid bottles, the portable Anti-Bottle can be easily tucked away, conveniently fitting into pockets, purses and packs.

Because of it's soft plastic material, the Anti-Bottle can be formed and manipulated in a number of ways, ways you'll find hugely benefitting for certain activities. All in all we found the Vapur Anti-Bottle best used in activities where you are needed to hold the bottle for extended periods of time; activities such as running, hiking, climbing - the usual outdoor pursuits if you want to put a label on them.

When it comes to running I've always hugely hated having to run with a bottle. Being someone with fairly small hands, holding a normal bottle for extended periods of time can become a pain. Whilst over the years we've seen a range of ways to combat the usual cylinder bottle such as bottles with holes in to make comfier to hold, none of them have really offered a solid option for those of you who simply don't like your conventional bottle. Vapur however have combated this, and due to its ability to be manipulated in a number of different ways, you soon found a grip comfortable enough to run with.



Hiking sees the Vapur Anti-Bottle's ease of access come into its own. Each bottle has a built in carabiner by what you'd call the top of a conventional bottle. This carabiner makes it insanely easy to simply secure on your rucksack or belt loop (although we found this to pull our trousers down!), and then be removed when you need a drink. Climbing follows the same trend as hiking, simply attach the Anti-Bottle to your harness and drink away when you need a top up!

The carabiner is a welcome addition, and isn't limited to just the outdoors. For example if you're someone who always ends up with his bottle of water leaking all over his clothes in your gym bag, just simply clip the Vapur Anti-Bottle to the side of your bag. When storing them, you can also clip them to something in the kitchen, be it a door handle, on to one another or on to a random object, you'll be sure to know where they are.

So we've established how they fare in the outdoors world; absolutely brilliantly for those of you who didn't pick it up. But what about the indoors world? It's absolutely no secret that the majority of the country choose to ply their fitness against the gyms around the country, so does the Anti-Bottle offer anything here?

We'll be totally honest, when it comes to the gym the Anti-Bottle isn't a game changer nor a complete dud. Whilst it adapts well to your cardio exercises such as running or cycling due to their links with outdoor activities, when it comes to lifting weight, well a bottle is a bottle.

Where it does excel though is its ability to fit anywhere! If you're someone who takes all his worldly belongings to the gym, you're likely going to run out of bag space pretty quickly, and the Vapur products will fit literally anywhere. They are also surprisingly good protein shake holders due to how little room they take up in your gym bag. Bare in mind these don't have shakers in them though so you're likely to get some pretty lumpy protein chunks floating around.

THE ANTI-BOTTLE JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER!

✓ REUSABLE

Vapur Anti-Bottles are BPA-free and are constructed of three layers of ultra-durable plastic. The innermost layer is made from FDA-approved polyethylene, which is then bonded to two layers of nylon for strength and durability. Every Anti-Bottle is designed to withstand everyday use and regular cleaning. The inner layer is odor and taste resistant, so it can safely be reused again and again! The Anti-Bottle is also proudly made in the USA.

✓ FOLDABLE

The Anti-Bottle is designed to stand when full and can be rolled, folded or flattened when empty, making it easy to use and carry everywhere you go. Unlike rigid water bottles, that are bulky when empty, the Anti-Bottle can be easily tucked away, conveniently fitting into pockets, purses and packs. The Vapur Anti-Bottle is simply the most portable, reusable water bottle on the planet.

✓ WASHABLE

The Vapur Anti-Bottle is dishwasher safe and cleans easily on the top rack of most dishwashers. First, remove the cap and carabiner, blow a little air into the bottle to inflate, then turn upside down and insert the spout over the prongs on the top rack of your dishwasher. It's that easy!

If you put any liquid other than water in your bottle, we recommend that you hand wash, using a few drops of dish soap and a bottle brush to completely remove any residue.

To air-dry your Anti-Bottle simply remove the cap and place it upside down on a drying-rack.

✓ FREEZABLE

You can freeze your Anti-Bottle for nice cold water or use it as an icepack! Fill your Anti-Bottle half-way, place it in the freezer overnight and then fill it the rest of the way with water in the morning. You'll have an icy-cold beverage for hours! (Use a Vapur Sweater on your Anti-Bottle to stop condensation and keep it even colder!)

✓ ATTACHABLE

It comes with a convenient carabiner, making it easy to clip to your purse, belt-loop or pack. Vapur Anti-Bottles also do not crack or dent, so don't worry - just clip it and go!

✓ SUSTAINABLE

From design and manufacturing, to shipping and distribution, right through to consumer use, the environment is considered throughout each step of the Vapur life cycle.

The flexible Anti-Bottle uses less energy to make and transport than rigid bottles. Manufactured in the United States, the Vapur Anti-Bottle is lightweight and ships flat, providing dual environmental benefits - up to 5 times more bottles per shipment container means fewer trucks on the road, lower fuel consumption and reduced carbon emissions. The packaging has also been designed to minimize paper, glue and scrap. Packaging is also printed with soy ink on wind powered presses.

We have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the Vapur Anti-Bottle will be a huge success with both outdoorsman and fitness fanatics around the world.

RAIDER'S VERDICT

Well it's a simple one. Vapur's Anti-Bottle is good. It's even better if you're someone who enjoys the outdoors world. Whilst it has its limitations with certain activities, or other activities it simply does no more or less than a normal bottle would do, there are certainly a range of activities; mainly in the outdoor world, that the Anti-Bottle is more than suitable for, and we have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the Vapur Anti-Bottle will be a huge success with both outdoorsman and fitness fanatics around the world!



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VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS, MERCENARIES
OR FREEDOM FIGHTERS?



IN THE OLD DAYS WE WOULD CALL THEM MERCENARIES AND THEIR HISTORY IS LONG IF NOT ALWAYS GLORIOUS. SOME OF THE EARLIEST RECORDED INSTANCES OF THE USE OF PAID AUXILIARIES DATES BACK TO THE 13TH CENTURY BC WHEN RAMASES II USED 11,000 MERCENARIES DURING HIS BATTLES. DURING THE 100 YEARS WAR BETWEEN ENGLAND AND FRANCE (1337-1453) THE FRENCH MADE USE OF GENOESE BOWMEN WHO WERE PAID FOR THEIR EFFORTS, ALTHOUGH BY AND LARGE THE FRENCH RELIED UPON THEIR MOUNTED CAVALRY, COMPRISED OF KNIGHTS TO BRING THEIR OWN VERSION OF 'SHOCK AND AWE' TO THE BATTLEFIELD. MORE RECENTLY WE HAVE SEEN MUCH, SOMETIME TOO MUCH REGARDING THE USE OF PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS (PMCS) ESPECIALLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.



AS A PROFESSION, IT IS ONE OF THE OLDEST IN THE WORLD BUT IT IS NOT ONE THAT GENERALLY SPEAKING IS WELL REGARDED. THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT A MAN WHOSE LOYALTY CAN BE BOUGHT, AND MANY GOVERNMENTS IMPOSE HARSH PUNISHMENTS ON THOSE DEEMED GUILTY OF EARNING THEIR WAGES AS A 'GUN FOR HIRE'.

Life however is not a simple case of black and white, and the activities of private soldiers and the organisations who employ them are not one single tale of illegality and occasional depravity. National armies are perfectly capable of filling that role when the opportunity arises. Moreover we are currently seeing a fracturing of conflict around the world, the traditional idea of one clearly defined side versus another no longer holds good, if indeed it ever did. Into the confused and confusing arena come the fighters and their motivations are as varied and as complex as the causes they fight for. This month we are going to take a trip through recent history and ask who are these men? What do they fight for? Should we regard them as principled individuals or little better than terrorists?

Given the constraints of space we are going to deliberately exclude discussion of certain groups. The world looks on with horror at the excesses of so called Islamic State and asks itself why so many seem determined to travel thousands of miles to put themselves at risk to bring terror to Syria, Iraq and areas of what can be best referred to as Kurdistan. As far as we can determine, the motivation is

ideological, if not religious and those involved fight for reasons other than money. Whilst there are no doubt exceptions to that generalisation, we will largely discount them. Frankly we could probably dedicate a whole feature to these fighters alone.

However the issue cannot simply be one of money, as we will see later there are many who are clearly motivated by a desire to do something when they perceive their nations or governments to be failing.

In the middle of the 20th Century the Spanish Civil War caused one of the greatest movements of private soldiers seen in the 100 years. The issues looked simple enough - a fascist rebellion headed by General Franco were opposed by the elected Republican government. It was far more complicated than that and it rapidly became a proxy war between the re-arming Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin. European governments maintained a studious neutrality about it but some 40,000 Europeans joined the International Brigades to fight against what they saw as the rise of fascism. Strictly speaking these men weren't mercenaries and they we can find no evidence that they were paid any substantial wages for their efforts and sacrifices. It would also be

foolish to overlook the fact that their involvement was in part politically motivated, as George Monbiot, writing in "The Guardian" observed:

"If George Orwell and Laurie Lee were to return from the Spanish civil war today, they would be arrested under section five of the Terrorism Act 2006. If convicted of fighting abroad with a "political, ideological, religious or racial motive" - a charge they would find hard to contest - they would face a maximum sentence of life in prison. That they were fighting to defend an elected government against a fascist rebellion would have no bearing on the case. They would go down as terrorists."

The International Brigades ultimately found themselves on the wrong side of history, in that the Republican cause was defeated although the prevalence of left-wing ideology in Europe throughout the 20th Century has tended to protect their reputation.

The Second World War did not see extensive use of mercenaries although it could be argued that the Gurkhas, from Nepal, who served with the British Army were technically mercenaries as their interests were more financial than principled, however that would be to overlook a very long history. The various Friekorps formed by the Germans were peopled by men whose ideology disposed them towards the world view of the Third Reich. By and large however the Second World War was so all-encompassing and so relatively clear-cut that there was little room for ambiguity.

The post-war world was however completely different, especially in Africa. The bloody history of those years is littered with the exploits of men who for various reasons were willing to hire their skills out. It is of interest that groups of mercenaries would at various time be assisting different factions. The mercenary group known as "4 Commando" led by Mike Hoare at various times assisted those attempting to break away from the Congo's new government and then later worked directly for that government and even assisted the UN and international peacekeepers. This varied career in a relatively short space of time most closely follows the popular idea of mercenaries, loyal only to their bank balance, although it is simply not possible to ascribe a single motivation to such diverse groups of men.

The late colonial period in Africa is littered with the use of mercenaries. Sometime this was simply the easiest way for a group or country to acquire





necessary military skills. Sometimes the mercenaries themselves while happy to take money for their services had ulterior motives for becoming involved, but it would be fair to suggest that this period, from the end of the Second World War until the late 1970s / early 1980s gave the world it's prevailing view of the nature of hired guns.

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was to change that completely. In part it was nothing more dramatic than a change of terminology, 'mercenaries' became 'Private Military Contractors' or PMCs. Generally they were employed by a company or companies and those companies were directly contracted by national governments. The former Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld justified the use of PMCs on the basis that they were "cost-effective and useful on the ground". It is estimated that at their height there were 100,000 PMCs in Iraq. In some respects the rise of of PMCs could be seen as the commercialisation of the military. The US government was not truly responsible for the activities of the PMCs it employed, they were sub-contractors. It did go to extensive lengths to ensure that they were not subject to Iraqi law and the most notorious incident involving Blackwater employees only finally came to court in the USA. Cynically it can be argued that since contractors are not employees of the government that makes use of them, the government has no financial liability beyond the terms of their contract with the company. It doesn't have to provide medical assistance, pensions, logistical care etc. Where it does it does so either because it is contracted or because it is in it's interests to do so.

The greatest issue with PMCs, and the reasons for the notoriety of Blackwater especially was their lack of responsibility. This was deliberate on the part of the contracting nations as it allowed PMCs to engage in activities which they could not as they might be bound by international treaties and obligations.

Those who worked for these much-more corporate military companies did so for the money, almost without exception. Pay for PMC operators could be as much as \$1,200 per day - around \$300,000 per annum. At the time David Petraeus, the US General was earning \$180,00 per annum. Despite these apparently huge salaries it was still deemed cheaper to pay this than to deploy serving US soldiers. In this period the term 'mercenary' was shunned although it is difficult to see quite what else operators could be called.

Iraq represented the high-point for PMCs and you could be forgiven for thinking that with the fall of Blackwater and the emergence of stories of excess by PMCs that their day had passed. Far from it. War on Want estimated that the global PMC market was worth several hundred billion dollars and if further concluded that western governments would struggle to wage war without the help of PMCs.

Despite the corporatisation of military services in the past couple of decades we are still seeing individuals choosing to engage in conflicts that their home nations shun. The recent conflict in Ukraine is a prime example of this with foreign fighters apparently flocking to join both sides. With the exception of the Russian Federation and Ukraine itself, no sovereign nation has involved itself in this

conflict beyond diplomatic and economic measures but it appears that many are willing to take great risks to support whichever side they believe to be in the right. Whether they are mercenaries in the truest sense remains to be seen, like the International Brigades they may get nothing but the tool of their trade and basic subsistence. To the best of our knowledge there is no widespread use of PMCs in the conflict.

What view our government takes of any British nationals who may be involved remains to be seen, in these days of social media it is very difficult not to end up with your photograph spread across the internet. Whether or not we would, collectively, approve of their actions also remains to be seen. In Ukraine accusations of extreme right wing groups becoming involved may or may not be true, we suspect that we will only find out long after the firing stops.

Whether for money or principle it seems that we will always have amongst us those who are willing to take up arms on behalf of a cause that is not their nation's. It is very easy to condemn those who do, especially if their beliefs run counter to our own. The laws of most nations these days sanction anyone who fights for anything other than his or her homeland but the truth is those same nations have always used fighters from beyond their borders when it suits them to do so. As with so much in human history, the right or wrong of it will most likely not be truly known until long after those involved are dead and gone, but as long as there is war and conflict there will be those irresistibly drawn towards it.



ALL NEW!

VIPER EVOLVED: FRESH NEW TACTICAL KIT ON OUR RADAR



EVOLVED

MORE TACTICAL OFFERINGS FROM
THE SPECIALISTS AT VIPER TACTICAL

THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL EVER BE ABLE TO SAY YOU DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH WARNING ABOUT THIS, ONCE AGAIN WE ARE BRINGING YOU MORE UPDATES FROM VIPER TACTICAL WHO HAVE MADE SOME BIG CHANGES IN 2015. LAST MONTH WE LOOKED PRIMARILY AT THEIR NEW RANGE OF TACTICAL CLOTHING AND OUTERWEAR BUT THIS MONTH THE THEME IS LOAD CARRYING. FROM POUCHES TO PLATFORMS AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN, THE OVERHAUL IS COMPLETE AND ONCE AGAIN WE PRESENT YOU WITH VIPER: EVOLVED!

£65.95

VIPER ELITE PLATFORM

Viper Tactical once again enter the Plate Carrier arena with their new and fully featured Elite Platform, a comprehensive modern armour carrier system. Built around a 600D Cordura chassis the carrier features a Ventex liner to promote air circulation, cooling and comfort. Armour pouches on both the front and the rear can be used to carry ballistic or training plates or left empty for a lighter overall package.

Adjustable 15mm padded shoulder straps provide a comfortable, low bulk solution but also house cable and hose routing options to keep gear accessible, snag-proof and secure. The removable MOLLE cummerbund provides an adjustable waist closure system and also houses internal storage pockets, ideal for radios, first aid kits and other necessities.

Full MOLLE webbing coverage makes for an easily customisable and rapidly reconfigurable system suitable for any mission or requirements and velcro panels allow for the attachment of morale patches or unit ID badges.

Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.





VIPER DUO MAG POUCH

£19.95

The Duo Mag Pouch (Triple) is Viper Tactical's solution for the mainstay of your chest mounted load carrying system.

Storing a total of 6 magazines in a 3-wide, 2-deep configuration, the pouch will fit comfortably in the center of your plate carrier or chest rig platform to give you a ready supply of ammunition where you need it most.

Just like the single-width Duo pouch, 600D Cordura provides the main material of the build again balancing weight with a compliant, easy to use flexibility. A full complement of bungee-toppers keeps your entire payload secure and safe until you decide it's time to unleash it and total MOLLE coverage means that the flexibility you have when it comes to configuration is unparalleled.

Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.

£14.95

VIPER MODULAR HYDRATION PACK

Viper Tactical's new Modular Hydration Pack features a compact size and a sleek, contoured design that's designed to fit neatly on the rear of most plate carrier platforms and provide a pouch to carry most hydration bladders on the market.

Instead of a traditional square/rectangular design the new Hydration Pack features a curved and contoured pattern that looks cooler, sits more neatly and becomes snagged less. Additionally a velcro closure of the lid, a small MOLLE panel and a loop-field ID attachment space keep the level of features high, despite its low-profile design. Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.



VIPER DUO MAG POUCH-SINGLE

£12.95

Viper's Duo Mag Pouch uses a MOLLE-compatible stacked design to enable you to store 2x M4/AR pattern magazines in a single width space. Using 600D Cordura material the pouch is built to balance strength with weight and flexibility in operation. The days of overbuilt 1000D Cordura pouches are over, there's no need for that level of rigidity or stiffness and the supple, compliant nature of the

lighter material gives a faster, smoother draw.

Fast-access bungee toppers give you the security you need for vigorous action but also a speedy, unhindered level of access to your magazines. A full MOLLE covering gives you the option to stack other MOLLE-compatible pouches or accessories over the magazine pouches for a truly unlimited number of configuration options.

Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.



ALL NEW!

VIPER EVOLVED: FRESH NEW TACTICAL KIT ON OUR RADAR

£11.95

VIPER V POUCH

Before you ask, the "V" is for "Versatile". Viper Tactical's new V Pouch is designed as a go-anywhere, do anything, pouch with uses only bound by your imagination. An emergency first aid kit, multi-tool, spare batteries or any other must-have items are easily stored and organised in this neat, unobtrusive and essentially useful pouch.

It can be fitted to a belt or mounted to a MOLLE platform to keep whatever you choose to store handy and the contents are secured from rattling around with an external bungee retainer.

Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.



Viper
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VIPER ELITE DROP LEG PLATFORM

If you use an alternative weapon system with longer magazines, like the P90, the prospect of putting magazines on your chest space is unrealistic and cumbersome. Dropping them down onto your thighs makes for a far easier-to-manage system and you can also simply extend the amount of accessible storage space you have no matter what you need to carry. The Elite Drop Leg Platform is an ambidextrous, universal system to allow you to crate space below your belt.

Using a full MOLLE coverage the platform can be outfitted with your choice of pouches or holsters. With an adjustable height hanger and two non-slip stabiliser straps, you'll find the platform is unshakeable in use. Thanks to QD-buckles it's easy to take on or off to scale your capacity. Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.





VIPER TABLET CASE

£16.95

With tablet computers becoming more and more accessible and tactical computing power becoming more and more in demand, the ability to carry a tablet into a tough situation is more and more necessary. The Viper Tactical Tablet Case is made from 600D Cordura with a soft, padded and screen-friendly fleece lining, incorporating elasticated retaining bands to keep your device safe inside. A removable carry handle and MOLLE compatible rear panel make the case modular and easy to incorporate into your existing storage system. Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.



£29.95

VIPER BOOT BAG

Keep the snakes outta your boots with this new Tactical Boot Bag from Viper Tactical, or at least keep them in one place without stinking up the joint! Not only can you store the vast majority of footwear neatly, but thanks to an external utility pouch you can also store associated items close at hand. Spare laces, a boot brush or deodouriser sprays can be kept together in one neat package that will save your car's boot liner or the carpet back at home when you return from a hard day's operation! Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.



VIPER ELITE WAIST BELT

£19.95

The new Viper Tactical Elite Waist Belt provides an extensive platform for pouches, accessories and holsters. Made from a 600D Cordura sleeve, padded and backed with a comfortable Ventex material to promote cooling and airflow, the Waist Belt also has 4 D-ring attachment points meaning that a suspender harness can be fitted to provide a slid and comfortable system even when heavy loads are carried. An adjustable internal webbing belt with QD-buckle provides the primary fitment and also makes the platform easy to put on and take off.

Available in Black, Green, Coyote or V-Cam.



MAYFLOWER

RESEARCH & CONSULTING LLC

SINCE FIRST APPEARING ON THE TACTICAL MARKET IN 2007, MAYFLOWER HAVE MADE A REAL NAME FOR THEMSELVES SPECIALISING IN DESIGNING AND MANUFACTURING TACTICAL NYLON GEAR. THEIR EMPHASIS IS ON THE "MILITARY ATHLETE" OPERATING AT THE VERY TOP OF THEIR GAME, AND MAYFLOWER PRODUCE LIGHTWEIGHT, LO-DRAW GEAR FOR THE DISCERNING OPERATOR.

GET LOADED UP!

Mayflower Research & Consulting LLC (MRC) was launched by a retired US Special Forces Warrant Officer, marking a transition period culminating a twenty-year career with six combat deployments as an assaulter and reconnaissance specialist. The intent of the company was to take that experience and continue to contribute back to the military and law enforcement community that has been engaged in and will continue to be engaged in open conflict and domestic security around the globe.

The design focus of MRC is to build mission focussed equipment that enhances the warfighters capability by both reducing the individual soldiers load as well as continuously adapting to the changing battlefield. They use several avenues to accomplish this. Firstly they have a very diverse group of equipment users providing constant feedback from distant battlefields to domestic urban areas; secondly they are constantly looking at new materials and manufacturing techniques to maintain durability and concurrently reduce weight.

They continually look at individual soldiers and law enforcement officers as athletes and how MRC can enhance their performance through fit, form and function. MRC also like to encourage skills enhancement, team building and athletic competition by sponsoring select individuals and teams throughout the year in different endurance races and team competitions.

Mayflower's goal is to continue to expand to meet their customers' needs as well as support their growing dealer network while being fiscally responsible to their employees during ever changing economic times. Technology currently moves at the "speed of need"; Mayflower's goal is to maintain the necessary agility to continually evaluate the relevance of each of their items and update and/or replace them as needed.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE KIT

Having established that Mayflower really know what they are talking about when it comes to lightweight, highly durable equipment that is more than fit for purpose, and you don't have to just take our word for it given the sheer number of soldiers and operators out there using it, let's have a closer look at some of their solutions.

Although MRC do have a really good range of bags, pouches and accessories it's their tight range of armour carriers and the modular system around them that makes their gear so unique. We've been lucky enough to have the gear outlined below available for test for some considerable time, and it's become a favourite amongst our test team too. All of the equipment listed is 100% made in the USA, and all materials are sourced there too.

1 MAYFLOWER ASSAULT PLATE CARRIER (APC)

The Assault Plate Carrier (APC) is designed to provide the wearer with a high degree of mobility while providing ample surface area for mounting mission essential pouches. The upper front of the APC contains an integral admin pouch with internal elastic loops to retain pens, pencils, chemsticks or similar items. The front lower half of the APC has an integrated pouch sized to hold up to three M4 sized magazines.

The shoulder pads are 3D mesh for comfort and feature a Velcro routing channel for cable and drinking tubes. The APC is supplied with MRCs standard PALS compatible cummerbund designed to accept 6"x 6" hard armour plates or side soft armour. The APC is also compatible with their suite of modular cummerbund. The Cummerbund with PALS Webbing is available to increase the modularity of their low-profile armour systems and plate carriers. The Mesh Cummerbund with PALS Webbing consist of a mesh body with four rows of PALS on the outer side and two rows of PALS webbing on the body side.

The APC is available in two sizes; S/M and L/XL with three cummerbund options. The S/M is available with either a small or medium cummerbund; the L/XL is available with either a medium or large cummerbund. The plate pockets are sized to accommodate stand alone or in-conjunction with BALCs/ESAPI or Swimmer cut plates. The S/M APC will fit small, medium and 10"x12" sized plates. The L/XL APC will fit large and extra-large plates.

The Assault Plate Carrier is available in the following colours and fabrics: Coyote Brown: 500D solution dyed, Crye Multicam: 500D, and Black: 500D

2 MAYFLOWER LOW-PROFILE ARMOUR CARRIER

Now the Low-Profile Armour Carrier has proved to be a real favourite with the Raider team, and is designed to provide the wearer with a high degree of mobility while providing an acceptable amount of armour coverage. The hard armour plates are contained in pockets attached to the outside of the soft armour carrier allowing the soft armour to mould to the wearers body for long duration mission comfort. The Low-Profile Armour Carrier features webbing for use with removable ITW-Nexus SwiftClip Buckles on the front of the vest to allow the individual to mount various chest rigs directly to the carrier. This configuration allows the individual to use the same loadout with or without armour or have multiple chest rigs configured for different mission requirements.

The Low-Profile Armor Carrier is available in the following colours and fabrics: Coyote Brown: 500D solution dyed Crye Multicam: 500D Crye Multicam Litelok Ranger Green: 500D Black: 500D

3 MAYFLOWER UW CHEST RIG GEN IV

The UW Chest Rig Gen IV is a low-profile mission focussed rig built to be ambidextrous and designed to carry 4 x 5.56mm magazines, 2 pistol magazines,





up to 2 small radios (PRC-152/MBITR) as well as two GP pockets. The H style harness is removable via 4 one inch ITW-Nexus side release buckles and designed to be mounted to the front of the Low-Profile Armour Carrier. Elastic is provided for cable management and antenna relocation. All buckles are ITW-Nexus IR.

The UW Chest Rig Gen IV is available in the following colours and fabrics; Coyote Brown: 500D solution dyed, Ranger Green: 500D solution dyed, Crye Multicam hybrid: 330D & 500D, UCP: 500D, Black: 500D

4 MAYFLOWER HK417 RECCE CHEST RIG

MRC also really look to weapons specifics and make gear to meet particular requirements and this rig is a perfect example of this, The Recce Chest Rig (HK417) is designed as a long range, long duration reconnaissance rig to be used with the HK417 platform. To accommodate the increased weight this chest rig is made of a combination of 500D and 1000D materials.

This chest rig is designed to be ambidextrous and carry 6 x HK417 magazines (3 open top, 3 in flapped pouches), two large GP pouches provided with a full flap (removable), and a flap and divider (removable) allowing an inter-team radio (PRC-152/PRC-148) with a BA 5590 or similar sized battery as the power source to be carried on either side, and two small GP pouches sized for a camera, GPS, flash bang, mini-frag or similar sized items. The H style harness is padded and adjustable for width (horizontal portion of the H) for use with or without armour and has elastic and 1" webbing vertically spaced on the front for cable/antenna management, hydration tube routing and the mounting of additional small items. Elastic is provided on the front underside of the vest for antenna relocation. All buckles are ITW-Nexus IR.

Due to the size of the HK417 magazines this chest rig will accommodate several different types/



quantities of other types of 7.62mm magazines.

The Recce Chest Rig (HK417) is available in the following colours and fabrics; Coyote Brown solution dyed, Ranger Green solution dyed, Crye Multicam, UCP, and Black.

5 MAYFLOWER 7.62 HYBRID CHEST RIG

The 7.62 Hybrid Chest Rig is a low-profile rig built to be used in the Law Enforcement sniper/counter sniper environment when a lightweight small package is necessary for climbing over obstacles and/or maintaining a low profile in a firing/hide position. The chest rig is designed to carry three 7.62mm magazines (POF, SR25, M110, DPMS, FN, SCAR H or similar sized) or 7.62x39 magazines (AK-47 or AKMs) in an integral pouch with an adjustable shock cord retention system closure. The front of the magazine pouch has three general purpose pouches sized to carry the tools of the trade; mini binos, mini laser range finder, GPS, cell phone, PDA etc.

The sides of the chest rig have three rows of PALS webbing to tailor the remainder of the chest rig for the mission. The H style harness features loops to route antennas, comms wires and hydration bladder tubing and is removable via 4 one inch ITW-Nexus side release buckles and again is designed to be mounted to the front of the Low-Profile Armour Carrier. The body of the chest rig has a built in map pocket with a velcro closure. All buckles are ITW-Nexus IR.

The 7.62 Hybrid Chest Rig is available in the following colours and fabrics; Coyote Brown: 500D solution dyed, Crye Multicam: 500D, Crye Multicam Litelok, Ranger Green: 500D, Black: 500D, A-TACS AU: 500D, Desert Digital: 500D

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

When you look at the descriptions of the kit detailed above you can start to see why MRC gear has become "The Operators Choice", especially when it comes to the fabulous modularity of the Low-Profile Armour Carrier system.

As I said earlier we've had this, along with the Assault Plate Carrier, on test for a good while and we are all very, very impressed. Mayflower have a reputation for lightweight gear, and even with any of the different Chest Rig options mounted this is still a really "go to" bit of kit! The quality of fabric and materials is absolutely first rate, and the attention to detail is absolutely stunning; we all know it's those little changes and tweaks that can make or break a bit of gear, and the obvious knowledge of how this gear is utilised in the real world comes shining through wherever you look. What also amazes me is that without the armour inserts this gear is really competitively priced too given the quality!

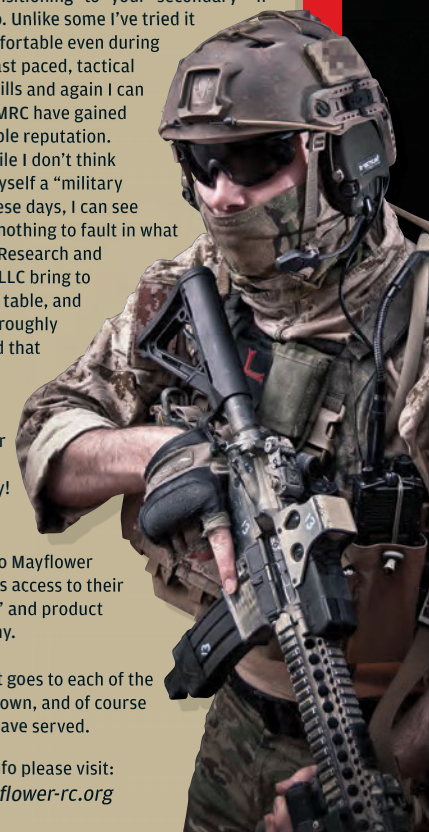
I have to say that my favourite setup is the Low-Profile Armour Carrier with the UW Chest Rig mounted directly. For running range drills this gives more than enough real estate to carry all that I need. The vest is comfortable to wear for extended periods, and I love the fact that I can ditch the chest rig, and its accumulated weight, during rest periods without having to remove the vest itself. I can totally understand why soldiers and operators at "the sharp end" love this system too, as they can change out the entire rig for another model easily if dictated by their mission.

Overall the L-PAC rides at a nice height too (albeit at 6'2 I'm a big lad!), so if you're using it in conjunction with a battle belt it doesn't hinder transitioning to your secondary if you need to. Unlike some I've tried it stayed comfortable even during dynamic, fast paced, tactical shooting drills and again I can see where MRC have gained their enviable reputation. Overall, while I don't think I can call myself a "military athlete" these days, I can see absolutely nothing to fault in what Mayflower Research and Consulting LLC bring to the tactical table, and I would thoroughly recommend that you check out their fabulous gear at your earliest opportunity!

Our sincere thanks go to Mayflower for giving us access to their "in theatre" and product photography.

Our respect goes to each of the warriors shown, and of course to all who have served.

For more info please visit:
www.mayflower-rc.org



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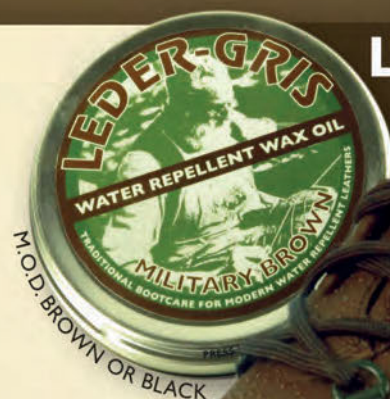
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ALL NEW!



HEADCAMS

COMPARATIVE REPORT

VIDEO RECORDING TECHNOLOGY HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE THE DAYS OF LARGE CAM-CORDERS. LONG GONE ARE THE CHUNKY EXAMPLES OF YESTERYEAR, INSTEAD WE NOW HAVE MORE WAYS TO RECORD VIDEO THAN WE COULD SHAKE A STICK AT. FROM DSLR CAMERA TO SMARTPHONES, THERE IS SIMPLY A WAY FOR MOST PEOPLE TO KNOW CAPTURE VIDEO RECORDINGS WITH EASE...

HEADCAM ROUND UP 101

THE ALL-SEEING ELECTRIC EYE



Firstly, we're not here to talk to you about fancy digital cameras with video functions or a range of smartphones. No, this month we will be taking a look at the world of head-cams. So firstly, what exactly is a head-cam? Well it's as simple as it sounds. Head-cams originally started out as being simply a type of video camera that you are able to mount to a variety of different helmets, but as time has gone on companies have released bolt-ons to allow you to mount them to a number of other devices.

With the point of the head-cam being that you, the user, are able to simply strap this head-cam on, and get some brilliant video recording of your high octane sports or hobbies that you wouldn't have been able to do in another way. Head-cams have been greatly applauded by many in the outdoors industry, giving both seasoned veterans and mere enthusiasts the ability to record their chosen sport. We've seen head-cam footage from a wide range of sports in the past, with everything from boxing to snowboarding being captured on these miniature recording devices.

Another instance that we've seen head-cams used as well is on the battlefield. Now we're not talking about Battlefield 4 here, we're talking about real locations embroiled in some form of war. We've seen everything from huge firefights to some hugely satisfying mini-gun action.



HEAD-CAMS HAVE OPENED UP AN ENTIRELY NEW FORM OF VIDEO FOOTAGE, FOOTAGE THAT ALLOWS US, THE VIEWER, TO GET A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF A SPECIFIC SPORT, HOBBY OR LOCATION THAT WE'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST, AND FOR THAT WE ARE HIGHLY GRATEFUL!

LET US BREAK DOWN SOME BASIC ESSENTIALS FOR YOU...

RIGHT THEN, WHAT MAKES A GOOD HEAD-CAM?

1 VIDEO QUALITY

Let's get the obvious one out of the way first. When recording video, you want good video quality, it's a simple as that really. However, what may start to get confusing is the various numbers that are thrown at you in regards to film quality. The three qualities you will see in this article are as follows - 720p, 1080p and 4K.

Without boring you in regards to the specifics of these three different video quality, we'll simply tell you which is the best quality of the three and the worst of the three. 720p, otherwise referred to as HD or High Definition, is at the bottom of the quality pile here. 4K is currently the best video quality on the market, however unless you have a 4K TV or PC monitor, you're unlikely to benefit from the ability to record in 4K. 1080p is bang in the middle of the two; not as bad as 720p but not as good as 4K, however it is by far the most used video quality.

So in short, from worst to best - 720p - 1080p - 4K

2 DURABILITY

When it comes to recording high octane sports, the chances are you're going to take a few tumbles here and there. For example, when testing some of these, my chosen sport was skateboarding. Skateboarding can certainly be a very unforgiving past-time at the best of times, and there were a few occasions where I went head first at some pretty hard objects.

What you want to know is that whilst you may have gone headfirst into something pretty solid, your camera isn't broken, because let's face it, a night in the hospital because you've broken a bone is nothing compared to replacing an expensive camera.

So our advice here? Make sure you visit a ton of forums specific to your chosen hobby, look for some recommendations there and go from there. The last thing you want to do is end up buying the wrong camera, because what works for one sport, might be completely useless for another!

3 RELIABILITY

Reliability covers everything from the ability to transfer your video to your PC without it corrupting, to the screen turning itself off when in use correctly so you're not draining needless battery life.

We'll be honest, when it comes to testing how reliable an electronic device is, you're walking a very fine line. On one hand you've got the guys who've owned their cameras for years, have never had any problems with them and likely never will until they decide to replace it themselves. Yet on the other hand you've got the people who have no amount of problems with their device, and it ends up at the bottom of a ravine somewhere because... well just because.

So we've simply planned around this and looked at three main points - did the camera ever quit recording, did the camera turn itself off for no

apparent reason and did we see any files corrupted; be that on device or whilst transferring it.

4 EASE OF USE

Head-cams aren't big. In fact they are very small devices that can be an absolute pain in the proverbial backside to work with at times. However certain companies have managed to make use of what little real estate they have than others, and this leads us to our fifth topic - ease of use.

Whilst there isn't much out there to make head-cams easier to use, there are certain companies that have added neat little features to help you out. We don't want to go into much detail here so we'll move onto our last point...

5 ACCESSORIES

When it comes to accessories, well there is very little out there at the moment. However, what is out there is hugely helpful. What you've got to keep in mind however is that these accessories will not be cross-compatible so you best make sure that you buy the right camera, otherwise you won't be able to buy the correct accessories!

Again, like the durability section, we would advise you do some digging first aimed at your chosen hobby and make sure you're able to buy the correct accessories for the head-cam you've lined up. Because you don't want to end up with a head-cam that is useless for what you plan on using it for!

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GO-PRO HERO4 SILVER **PAGE 38**

SINCE LAUNCH GOPRO HAVE BEEN HUGE IMPRESSIVE WITH THEIR RELEASES, AND THE NEWEST RANGE OF PRODUCTS DROPPED FROM GOPRO ARE NO EXCEPTION TO THIS. THE GOPRO HERO 4 RANGE HAS TWO BIG PLAYERS IN IT - THE 4 SILVER, AND THE 4 BLACK; BOTH OF WHICH WE WILL BE REVIEWING IN THIS ARTICLE. WHICH ONE WILL YOU GO FOR?



SONY ACTION CAM HD-AS **PAGE 39**

SONY HAVE LONG BEEN A PLAYER IN THE VIDEO RECORDING MARKET. HELL, I THINK THE FIRST CAM-CORDER THAT CAME INTO THE HOUSE WAS A SONY DEVICE, AND THIS WAS A GOOD 20 YEARS BACK NOW! EVER SINCE SONY ANNOUNCED THEY WERE GOING TO BE RELEASING A PRODUCT INTO THE ALREADY OVERSATURATED HEAD-CAM MARKET, THERE WERE A LOT OF CONCERNS, AS WELL AS A LOT OF HOPES FOR SONY.



DRIFT HD ACTION CAM **PAGE 40**

DRIFT ARE BY NO MEANS A NEWCOMER TO THE HEAD-CAM MARKET, IN FACT THEY'VE NOW RELEASED MULTIPLE ITERATIONS OF THEIR CAMERA. THE LATEST IN THE LINE; THE DRIFT HD, CONTINUES TO UTILISE THEIR ICONIC DESIGN AND SHAPE, AND NOW INCLUDES SOME REAL NIFTY LITTLE FEATURES THAT WILL NO DOUBT MAKE YOU QUESTION YOUR PREVIOUS BRAND ALLEGIANCES.



GO-PRO HERO4 BLACK **PAGE 41**

GOPRO SET OUT TO MAKE THE BEST CAMERA ON THE MARKET WITH THE HERO 4 BLACK, AND IF TRUTH BE TOLD THEY PRETTY MUCH NAILED IT. WITH 4K RESOLUTION, 1080P RECORDING AT 120FPS (FRAMES PER SECOND) AND A RANGE OF OTHER FEATURES, ALL IN THE TRIED AND TESTED GOPRO BODY, WELL YOU CAN'T REALLY GO WRONG CAN YOU!



GoPro
Be a HERO.

**GOPRO
HERO 4 SILVER**
PRICE: IRO £250



Since launch GoPro have been hugely impressive with their releases, and the newest range of products dropped from GoPro are no exception to this. The GoPro HERO 4 range has two big players in it - the 4 Silver, and the 4 Black; both of which we will be reviewing in this article, however we'll start with the Silver rendition first.

GoPro have always released head-cams with above average video quality, and for years they've simply gotten better at what they do. GoPro tend to have this film quality that you just know it's been recorded on a GoPro, with it's barrel distortion and colour rendition. But how does the 4 Silver hold up to previous renditions?

Firstly the lens quality here has somewhat been improved. What we have now is even sharper footage than before, with less distortion and fuzziness around the edges; which is definitely a good thing. On top of this the processing seems slightly different, giving us much smoother imagery through sharp areas.

Overall though, whilst the video seems to be a lot smoother, we're not sure that smoothness holds up against the asking price of the Silver 4, so what else does it bring to the table?

Well, GoPro have gone about adding a ton of features that finally puts the control of your filming back into your hands. Now this won't guarantee better quality film, but if you have a basic understanding of photography and the camera in use, then you'll definitely see some improvement here.

ProTune has seen some work done to it as well. ProTune, a piece of software that comes with GoPro devices simply used to flatten the colour profile of your film, however now it unlocks a whole heap of settings including ISO limit and sharpness that will help you further improve your film; if you know what you're doing with it that is!

IN TERMS OF DURABILITY, THE SILVER 4 USES THE SAME TRIED AND TESTED BODY SHAPE AS PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THE HEAD-CAMS. A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING YOU ASK... WELL SEEING AS GOPRO HAVE FORGED AN EMPIRE BASED AROUND THAT ONE DESIGN, WE'LL GO WITH IT BEING A GOOD THING. WE'VE LITERALLY MANAGED TO DROP, SMASH, GO HEADFIRST INTO THINGS AND PLAY CATCH WITH THE SILVER 4 AND IT'S NOT ONCE STOPPED RECORDING, NOR HAS IT RANDOMLY TURNED ITSELF OFF.

There was however something that made the reliability of the camera a little iffy, but i'll get to that a little later.

In terms of how easy the Silver 4 was to use, well it doesn't really get much easier than this! With the new GoPro range, the mass appeal of the Silver 4 is the fact it now has a small LED screen built into the back for ease of use. Not only does this screen make navigating the device very easy, it also allows you for the first time on a GoPro device to see what you're actually going to shoot.

Being a touchscreen, we did have a few teething issues with it, sometimes having to press the screen more than once to get it to work, and this is where that issue of reliability comes into play. Whilst being the Silver 4's silver lining, it is also a slight hinderance at times.

As mentioned the first issue we had was how finicky the screen could be at times. Having to press things more than once to get it to register, shutting itself down, sometimes not shutting itself down... It was just a little inconsistent. Now the pressing things more than once isn't exactly a new thing with touch screens, so this we can allow, however the not turning off? That could be annoying, especially as these cameras already have such a small battery life!

In terms of accessories, the GoPro range will have you well stocked. A quick Amazon search will show you the scope of accessories available for the GoPro; far too many to list. Just know that if you buy a GoPro, chances are there'll be an accessory out there for you!

All in all, the GoPro HERO Silver 4 is a very, very good head-cam. The LED screen is a nice touch albeit a little unreliable at times and the improved image quality goes along way. We're definitely a fan though!



**FROM
£250**



SONY

**SONY
ACTION CAM HD-AS**
PRICE: IRO £250-300



Sony have long been a player in the video recording market. Hell, I think the first cam-corder that came into the house was a Sony device, and this was a good 20 years back now! Ever since Sony announced they were going to be releasing a product into the already oversaturated head-cam market, there were a lot of concerns, as well as a lot of hopes for Sony.

After a few failed attempts, Sony came up with the AS100V, and it became a fan favourite very, very quickly.

Starting at the very top again, the image quality of the AS100V isn't bad, especially considering its about the oldest head-cam on show in this article. It wasn't an amazing image quality, but nor was it terrible, simply put it does the job! One thing the AS100V does have that nearly all other head-cams do not have is a stabilisation setting. Whilst this was at first quite a 'woohoo' moment, it was soon deflated due to the way in which the stabilisation works... Simply put, it will just end up with you having less width to your shot. This doesn't mean that the stabilisation is useless though, it just means you need to get used to using it correctly!

The main falling point of the AS100V though was its underwater capabilities. Having a spherical lens front, the AS100V was unable to focus, which as you can imagine is a big no-no. This spherical lens however does lend itself well to snow sports, with the snow unable to stick to the lens!

IN TERMS OF DURABILITY AND RELIABILITY, THE AS100V IS ABOUT THE BEST THERE IS. IT'S A NO NONSENSE HEAD-CAM, SO NO FINICKY LED TOUCHSCREEN, AND IT'S PRACTICALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE. WE NEVER ONCE DROPPED FRAMES WHILST RECORDING, IT DIDN'T ONCE TURN ITSELF OFF AND IT GAVE US AN ACCURATE BATTERY POWER READING THROUGHOUT. I GUESS ALL THOSE YEARS IN THE VIDEO RECORDING MARKET HAVE PAID OFF, AY SONY?

The AS100V is also very easy to get your head around minus a few features. The button size and layout is very accessible. Two buttons are located on the side of the camera which allow for manoeuvring through the menu, and the buttons are very tactile. However the menu is abbreviated using three or four letter descriptions, which can be a little confusing if you don't have the manual to hand.

The best feature we found though was the use of a smartphone app to allow you to change all the settings, preview the framing and playback your clips. Whilst the Wi-Fi does burn through extra battery life it is definitely a nice little feature to have.

So, we've established that Sony have made a very capable head-cam in the AS100V, however it all starts to fall apart in regards to accessories. Due to the shape of the AS100V, the head-cam's only mounting point is on the bottom of the camera which made mounting it an absolute pain. It also has no tilt function which was very crippling. All of these things combine mean that the AS100V can only be mounted directly on top of the helmet or onto handlebars or suction mounts. A shame really as Sony were definitely onto a winner here.





DRIFT
HD ACTION CAM
PRICE: IRO £250



Drift are by no means a newcomer to the head-cam market, in fact they've now released multiple iterations of their camera. The latest in the line; the Drift HD, continues to utilise their iconic design and shape, and now includes some real nifty little features that will no doubt make you question your previous brand allegiances.

THE IMAGE QUALITY PROVIDED BY THE DRIFT HD IS ACTUALLY VERY GOOD FOR SUCH AN INEXPENSIVE HEAD-CAM. IT PROVIDES A COLOURFUL AND CONTRASTY IMAGE STRAIGHT OUT WITHOUT ANY EDITING. IT PROVIDES SHARP IMAGERY THAT WILL PLEASE MOST AND QUITE FRANKLY IT DOES THE JOB INTENDED. WE DID HOWEVER FIND THAT THROUGH THE AREAS OF HIGH CONTRAST, THE CAMERA PRODUCES SOME VERY CHUNKY EDGES, WHICH IS A BIG NO-NO FOR IMAGE QUALITY. ADDITIONALLY THE CONTRASTY IMAGES DON'T LEAVE MUCH ROOM FOR POST PRODUCTION EDITING. OVERALL SOME GOOD POINTS AND SOME NOT SO GOOD POINTS WHEN IT COMES TO IMAGE QUALITY.

In terms of reliability, the Drift HD has a few teething problems. Firstly there were a few battery issues that gave us inconsistent results. The Drift HD turned itself off a couple of times, and the battery reading was far from accurate. It also walks the very thin, scary line between water-resistant and water-proof, and the grey area between the two can lead to some pretty catastrophic problems. Best bet? Don't take it near water... Just to be on the safe side!

The Drift HD does redeem itself though in the ease of use category. The Drift HD is just a very simple head-cam to get your head around. The buttons are easy to use, and they provide good positive feedback to let you know you've actually pressed them, letting off a little click feeling after use. The large LCD colour screen on the side of the camera is also a brilliant feature, allowing you to not only look through menu's with ease, but also allowing you to see exactly what you're framing.

This LCD colour screen comes into its own when you take into account the Drift HD's mounting options. The Drift HD is unique in the fact that it is constructed mainly for mounting onto the side of a helmet, which produces a great PoV for sporting activities. However the folks at Drift realise this isn't to everyone's liking, so they've also allowed the Drift HD to be mounted flat via a tripod. The one small problem with the design of the camera is it's bulkiness. And as we found the Drift HD isn't exactly waterproof, the waterproof case sold separately by Drift makes it even bulkier.

So what does this all mean? Well the Drift HD isn't a bad head-cam, it just has a few shortcomings. The lack of full waterproofing was a huge area of debate within the office. Some saying it's not really the end of the world, and others blasting it completely. We're of the opinion that if you really want to waterproof it, buy the case. The reliability issues were the biggest problem for us, as they make us think other things could go wrong in the future.

However it does have some good points. The side LCD screen is a very nice feature, along with its ease of use. It also has a very nice weight to it and the video quality isn't all that bad. If we had to choose a use for the Drift HD, i'd say it makes a very good beginners camera, or a backup camera for those of you who take more than one head-cam out with you just in case!



GoPro

Be a HERO.

**GOPRO
HERO 4 BLACK**
PRICE: IRO £350



Whilst we mentioned earlier that the head-cam market is highly saturated with various different brand names, the harsh reality is that a lot of them just aren't very good. Whilst there are some other brands out there that produce some brilliant head-cams, we just couldn't leave the Hero 4 Black out, as quite frankly it's an absolute monster in regards to head-cams.

GoPro set out to make the best camera on the market with the Hero 4 Black, and if truth be told they pretty much nailed it. With 4K resolution, 1080p recording at 120FPS (Frames Per Second) and a range of other features, all in the tried and tested GoPro body, well you can't really go wrong can you!

Now when it comes to all of these fancy recording resolutions such as 4K and 1080p, not all of them are created equal. Whilst 4K may leave you with stunning results via one camera, another camera may not provide the same image quality. Confusing right?

That said, the image quality on the GoPro Hero 4 Black is amazing; both in 4K and 1080p. However resolution isn't the be all end all. Other things play a huge part in the overall end product, including processing, lens quality and functionality. However the Hero 4 Black does all of these extremely well as well.

When it comes to actually recording though, I'd suggest just throwing the 4K idea out of the window for now. Actually viewing video in 4K requires either a 4K TV or PC Monitor, both of which are hugely expensive as things stand. So I'd suggest just waiting for these things to become more accessible till you start recording in such a way. I'd also say ignore the 4K because the 1080p on the Black is so damned good that having a 4K recording and then downsizing it to 1080p would just be a waste of time.

The image quality here is just simply the best we've ever seen on a head-cam. This however is mostly down to the brilliant processing and lens featured on the Hero 4 Black.

IN TERMS OF RELIABILITY THE GOPRO HERO 4 BLACK HAS BEEN FLAWLESS. NOT A SINGLE ISSUE WITH IT WHATSOEVER. WE'VE DROPPED IT NUMEROUS TIMES AND NOT ONCE HAS IT FAILED ON US. BATTERY LENGTH IS STILL A LITTLE BIT OF AN ISSUE, BUT THE BATTERY LIFE READOUT IS PRETTY MUCH SPOT ON. TAKE INTO NOTE THOUGH THAT THE BATTERY DESIGN HERE IS DIFFERENT TO OTHER GOPRO MODELS, SO YOUR OLD ONES JUST SIMPLY WON'T CUT IT HERE.

Ease of use shines here, and it would be by far the easiest head-cam on the market to use if it wasn't for its little brother and its fancy LCD screen. GoPro have made a ton of handy little improvements here though which make a difference. For example the front LCD screen no longer relies entirely on pictograms that must be deciphered.

They've also redesigned the little switch on the side that used to toggle the Wi-Fi on and off. With its small battery life this is a huge plus to us as we'll no longer have to continuously check that we're not wasting battery life with the Wi-Fi turned on.

Accessories are exactly the same as the GoPro Hero 4 Silver. Just head over to Amazon and take a look for yourself, there is literally something for everyone! I guess that's the advantage of being the market leader!

GoPro set out with one task in mind when designing the Hero 4 Black - to make the best head-cam on the market, and they have definitely succeeded. Whilst it may be a bit pricey, you simply can't underestimate just how good the GoPro Hero 4 Black is, and if you're someone who spends a lot of time using a head-cam, I'd strongly suggest you go and invest in this and future-proof yourself for the coming years!



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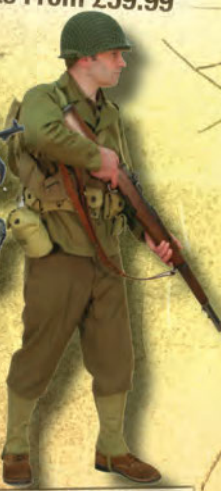
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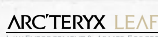
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SWISS ARMY KNIFE THE HUNTSMAN

It seems a bit old-school when our world is now full of awesome multitools that promise to do everything from opening a bottle to performing open-heart surgery all on their own, but the humble Swiss Army knife still has a valuable role to play.

Swiss Army knives date back to 1891 and were produced for most of the intervening years by two companies - Victorinox who developed the knife originally and Wenger who manufactured their own version. The Swiss, being fair-minded people sourced their knives from both companies equally until Victorinox acquired Wenger in 2005. Both brands still survive to this day. The Swiss army knife has become so ubiquitous that it seems almost pointless to describe it and they are available in more designs and flavours than Ben & Jerry's Ice cream. We can recommend pretty much all of them but for this month's piece we're going to suggest one in particular - the Huntsman.

For a start it'll go into a pocket in a way that most multitools and the larger knives won't, so you'll always have it with you a critical factor with any tool - it's exactly no use at all if you leave it at home or in your barracks. It does most things - there are two knife blades, screwdrivers,

scissors a saw blade, an auger or awl. There's a toothpick and tweezers, more useful than you can imagine, trust us. All of this is contained in a small robust package. The steel is top quality, the blades take a solid hard-wearing edge and the scales are made of tough, red plastic.

It is really what most of us think of when ever Swiss army knives are mentioned. Leatherman and Gerber are all very well when you need to do bigger jobs or when a pair of pliers are necessary but most of the time they're not and although much better than in years past, the knife blades on multitools can be a pain in the backside to get out.

Simplicity wins and the good old Swiss army knife is simple. No locks, no cute twists this, pull that. Need a blade? Flip it out. Need to open a can? Got that covered. There is a reason that they have been around for well over a hundred years and show no sign of fading in popularity, they work. Best of all you can pick one up for less than £20. We'd get some paracord on that keyring loop straight away, makes it harder to lose and harder for your mates to 'borrow'!

Best prices we have been able to find is on Amazon.co.uk where it's £18.47



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SJ4000 CAMERA AND ACTION ACCESSORIES

And now for something completely different. We have a large HeadCam review in this month's issue and let's face it, every man and their dog seem to be sporting an action camera of some kind these days. If you're lucky enough that your job takes you to far flung and interesting places, even more reason to try and bring back something of your time there - assuming that the powers that be allow you to do so...

Our second item in Essentials this month is the SJ4000 action camera. We call it the "NoPro" because it obviously isn't a high end branded camera and also because it's makers have clearly looked at the best out there and gone, "yeah, we'll just copy that". The kicker for the SJ4000 though is the price - hunt around and you'll pick one up for about £50-60. At that price if it get eaten by a Rhino or run over by a Landrover you're not going to cry too much, and that means you'll be more inclined to take it where the best images are to be found, where things get difficult and messy.

Frame rate is either 30fps or 60 fps and in decent light this gives smooth, high-definition video. Batteries and chargers can be bought from well-known auction sites for a few pounds and are a worthwhile investment.

Considering that the current GoPro Hero 4 costs around £400 you, like us, might be tempted to take the view that if there is any chance of your camera ending up under several tons of armoured vehicle or plummeting from a cliff, better that you're waving goodbye to £50. We have been using the SJ4000 for some months now and we really can't fault it. Is it as well made as the original? No. Will it last as long? Probably not, but you'll go through a few of these before you get anywhere near the cost of the real thing.

Video output, especially at 1080p is more than acceptable and it does come packaged with more mounts, straps, plates and sticky things that you can shake a stick at. If you're going somewhere interesting, if you just want to shoot video of your mates the SJ4000 is so cheap that it would be almost rude not to take one along for the ride.

You can find the SJ4000 through many outlets - ours came from Amazon in the UK and cost £59.99 however these are very widely sold so it pays to shop around.

Features include...

- 30m water resistant casing - ideal for wet and dusty environments.
- High definition screen that displays and replays fascinating videos recorded.
- Detachable battery that is easy to replace and prolongs your camera's service life.
- Video recording while charging.
- 12-megapixel HD wide-angle lens.
- HDMI HD output.
- Web camera.
- Support MicroSD storage cards available up to 32GB maximum.
- Multiple video recording formats include: 1080P, 720P, WVGA.
- Recorded in MOV format.
- Multiple shooting modes including single shot.

DON'T MISS A MOMENT!



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SMITH'S POCKET PAL SHARPENER

Finally this month, and closely related to our first item is the Smith's Pocket Pal knife sharpener. Your Swiss army knife isn't the only blade you'll need to put and edge on and frankly a dull blade is right up there with chocolate fireguards in terms of usefulness. We don't want to cart a stone around with us when we're out and about so this is the perfect solution.

Smith's new Pocket Pal Multi-Functional Knife Sharpener features pre-set crossed carbides and ceramic stones, which provide the "Perfect Edge" every time. This is far more practical than similar products that only have ceramic stones and speeds up the sharpening process. The carbides provide quick edge setting, and the specially shaped ceramic stones are designed to give you a razor sharp edge on either standard or serrated edges. The carbide and ceramic stones are reversible and replaceable.

A fold out, tapered round, diamond coated rod is designed for sharpening serrated as well as standard edges. Unit is compact, lightweight, durable, and comes with a lanyard hole.

Features include...

- Diamond coated rod sharpens both straight and serrated edges.
- Carbide blades quickly set a dull or blunt knife.
- Ceramic stones give a razor-like edge.
- Stones can be reversed and replaced to extend the life of the unit.
- Lanyard hole for carrying or for tying firmly to your kit!
- The Pocket Pal is available from The Bushcraft Store (www.thebushcraftstore.co.uk) and costs only £9.95 - bargain!



TIME TO
SHARPEN
UP KID!



SKATEBOARDING

THE LAST FEW ARTICLES HAVE BEEN A BIT, WELL, GROWN UP. NOT THIS MONTH. HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO EITHER RELIVE YOUR YOUTH AND INJURE YOURSELF ALL OVER AGAIN OR TO SIGH IN FRUSTRATION AT THE OLD FOLK TALKING ABOUT STUFF THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND!

Skateboarding is a more personal subject for me than most. I first met a board back in the early to mid 70's when my father, who had been away on business, brought one back for my brother.

It wasn't very big, it had clay wheels and the trucks had precious little play in them so steering wasn't much of an option. You're probably expecting something along the lines of "but I was bitten by the bug.." I'm afraid not. It was really cool,

because it had actually come from America, but beyond that... not much really.

Some years later, when skateboarding assumed craze status I got back into it. Now we were into the era of proper urethane wheels and sealed bearings and trucks that could be tuned. Ah - technology. I still have my board from those days, built by my old man. American Cycle System (ACS) trucks - fairly wide, Kryptonite wheels (2nd if I remember, the makers name had been machined off) and a custom deck in the slalom style - longer, no flex and cut away fore and aft to aid turning. It went like the wind. I could never manage all the cool stuff, but I could hammer down a hill or through obstacles as if the wheels were glued to the ground. Happy days! Yes we did wear protective kit - my first helmet was Jofa - a Swedish ice hockey helmet, my second and last was a Norcon, considered by many to be the best available. Doing a hard left turn on a downhill I tested that by parting company with my board and landing on the back of my head. I suspect I still carry neck damage from that all these years later but my head survived intact.

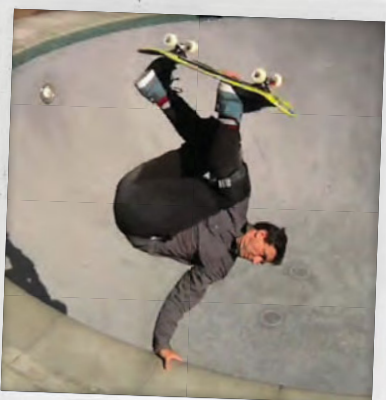
At the time, this would have been the late '70s, early 80s skateboarding divided into three distinct categories; freestyle, slalom and downhill with the boards getting bigger and stiffer as you progressed along that list. Today you would be forgiven for thinking that only the freestyling grinders survive but that's probably because local authorities in the UK eventually provided dedicated skate

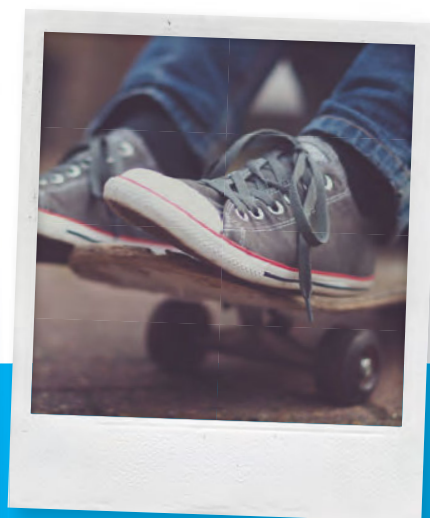
parks for them. That and it's still really cool to be able to do epic stunts. The slalom riders and downhillers needed space, in the case of the latter, lots of space and that meant roads. Roads and decent weather, two things which here in the UK aren't exactly predictable or safe.

If I have rekindled your long-lost passion or you want to get out there for the first time, what do you need?

Firstly you need a board, obvious really. It's worth having an idea of what you want to do - grabbing miles of air at the local park will be much, much harder if you have bought yourself a long, downhill board. Ask advice, see what others are using. You can buy online if you know what you want but you may prefer to find a local specialist and chat to them. A quick look at www.skatehut.co.uk shows prices from about £20 up to £120. www.routeone.co.uk goes as high as £140. That's for complete boards, and skateboards are pretty basic, a deck, trucks and wheels - you may actually choose to build your own board or start with a complete package and customise. No great technical skill is required - trust me!

Next - helmet. No ifs, no buts. You will land on your ass and your head will follow. Skate helmets aren't expensive and they're cool. A fractured skull or severe concussion really isn't. Both of the sites, as well as many others have a wide choice and you're talking around £30-£50. Not much not to seriously mess your day up. Unlike many bike helmet, skate helmets are designed to take knocks and keep going, so unless it takes a really solid thump you shouldn't have to replace it. Protection is generally better compared to bike lids as well, which makes for poorer airflow and greater weight, but you are much more likely to have plenty of time hanging about without your lid on. Knee pads, elbow pads, wrist protectors and gloves are to a greater extent optional. I have been grateful to each and every one of them in my time but I did stop wearing them as time went by. If you want them, and they do have their place, look for brands such as Pro-Tec and Capix. The nice thing about skating is that costs are relatively low. A couple of hundred quid will get you a board and protective gear. You can ride pretty much anywhere and even a





pair of Vans skate shoes don't cost too much (ok, they do, but hey! It's all about the look). Shoes do matter and flat, rubber soles are the norm. Grip tape is awesome stuff but skateboards and heels of any kind do not a match in heaven make.

There simply isn't enough room in the magazine to offer advice on learning to ride, so I'll offer some pointers as where you can find that information. The one thing I will say is push with your trailing foot, keeping your weight over the front truck, at least until you start to feel confident. Doing it the other way round is a recipe for landing on your backside almost instantly!

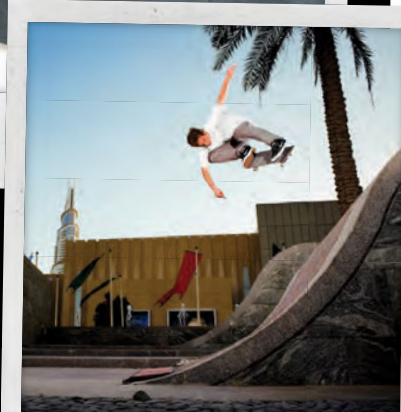
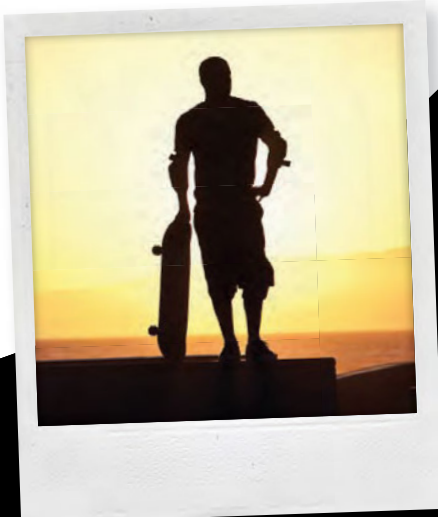
It should come as no surprise that there are people and companies out there who will happily take your money and teach you to skate. For many of you, already lying on your backs at the local park, this may seem utterly unnecessary but each to their own. A very quick Google search will land these and more: www.skatesandladders.co.uk www.skateboard-lessons.co.uk and www.learntoskate.co.uk. We're not endorsing any of these so if this is your thing, make your own enquiries. I couldn't find any specific clubs or organisations for 'older skaters' but the internet is awash with hits - do a bit of searching if you fancy some company while you wobble your way to skating nirvana!

Thanks to the interest in skating many years ago, most local authorities have created skate parks. To a newbie these can look very daunting as even relatively simple tricks seem impossible when just staying upright and on the board is a challenge. Unfortunately very few things in life worth doing are easy and you will fall on your ass, shoulder, face, nose - you get the idea. If this scares you, take up archery or something. Like BMX riding skating assumes a certain amount of time spent hitting the ground. It will happen and it's all part of it. Mostly it'll be more embarrassing than anything and if you only go for it half-heartedly you'll get nowhere fast so screw your courage to the hilt and put Mr. or Mrs. Pride on the back seat - everybody comes off, it's all part of the fun.

Enough about falling, what are the plus sides? Are there any plus

sides?! Loads. Once you can ride your board it's simply a great feeling. I'm sure surfers will say it's nothing like surfing but you can be forgiven - you sweep down even relatively shallow hills, you can feel the wheels grabbing the ground as you turn, your feet hugging the deck and the grip tape. It's a very physical pastime. And at times quite visceral too. I think it's the knowledge that the only thing between you and a spill is your skill and the deck beneath your feet - it's not a 'near death' thing but there is an underlying acknowledgement of vulnerability which gets translated into a sense of control, command and achievement as you counter and overcome it. Ooh - I could wax lyrical and I haven't been on my board for many years! It's really odd though, writing those last few lines I could almost feel the forces as they act on your legs and the way you feel the movement of the deck beneath you. Skating obviously made a much bigger impression than I realised. And there it is - anything that can do that is worth trying. Sure your first tentative rides will be more wobble than "whoosh" but it's worth it. You'll get a surprising amount of exercise out of it, it's not all about letting the board do the work, those hills don't climb themselves you know. Even if you don't want to invest at present but your interest is piqued, there are plenty of skate parks where you can hire equipment. If they are any good they will also offer advice and assistance to new skaters. You'll find them all over the UK, so a bit of searching should see you rolling.

Final thoughts - I know I can still ride my board I also know that if I come off I don't bounce they way I did all those years ago. So I tend not to. Skateboarding is resolutely youthful, some people get a bit snitty at the thought of older folks having a go, I say let them. (Actually I say something much stronger). It is something I would urge all readers to try, if only once. It's great fun and it seems to encompass all those thrills and feeling that most of us associate with childhood. Skating as time machine? Maybe not, but get out there and give it a go.



MAXPEDITION

GEAR FOCUS: LIFESTYLE OPTIONS

FOLLOWING OUR LOOK AT A RANGE OF DIFFERENT ITEMS THAT COVER THE 'EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS' MANTRA, THIS MONTH WE'VE DECIDED TO TAKE A STEP BACK FROM THE OLD FORMAT AND MOVE ONTO SOMETHING A LITTLE NEW. FROM THIS MONTH ON FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS WILL FOCUS ON A SINGLE BRAND AND HOW THEIR WARES SUIT THE EVERYDAY MARKET. THIS MONTH, MAXPEDITION!

MAXPEDITION LOOK BAG

The Maxpedition Look Bag is discreet and silent CCW shoulder bag. With an overall size of 13.5"(L) x 3"(W) x 10"(H), the bag offers excellent carry capacity. It includes a silent magnetic flap compartment. SRB shoulder strap buckles on both left and right sides which are 1.5", the strap adjusts from 52" max to 28" minimum and a removable shoulder pad is included.

In our eyes the Look Bag is the place to go if you're looking for a good shoulder bag. It looks the part, it's durable and at slightly under £100 you'll definitely get your money's worth in use.



MAXPEDITION CONDOR II BACKPACK

The popular CONDOR II backpack has a medium-sized design, but its surprisingly spacious interior can accommodate over 1350 cubic inches of gear and a 100oz/3L hydration reservoir with b-directional tube port (not included). However, what really makes the Condor II unique is that it's designed with more exterior PALS webbing than any Maxpedition backpack available. Its load bearing capability can be expanded greatly by using TacTie Attachment Straps to interact with a variety of Maxpedition external pouches, pockets, and accessories.



THE CONDOR II WILL REMAIN A COMFORTABLE CARRY NO MATTER HOW MUCH GEAR YOU DECIDE TO PACK OR ATTACH, BECAUSE IT'S ERGONOMICALLY DESIGNED WITH PADDED, CURVACEOUS BACKPACK STRAPS, STERNUM SUPPORT, AND SOFT, BREATHABLE BACK PADDING.

MAXPEDITION KODIAK GEARSLINGER

The Kodiak is the granddaddy of Fixed Strap Gearslingers, optimized to meet rugged and urban conditions and offering enhanced space with additional pockets and all the great Gearslinger features. This single shoulder backpack is designed to maximize utility when rotated towards front of body and fits up to 15.4" laptop computer. It's hard to believe a bag of this size would be so comfortable, but the Kodiak is designed durably with high carry potential, so it's always ready for domestic or international travel.



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR MAXIMUM SPACE AND UTILITY COMBINED WITH INSTANT ACCESSIBILITY, THIS IS THE EVERYDAY CARRY FOR YOU.

MAXPEDITION CENTURION PATROL BAG



Made extremely durable 1000D ballistic Nylon, this heavy duty patrol bag was specifically designed for harsh usage and urban environments. Equipped with high strength YKK zippers with paracord pulls, genuine UTX Duraflex Nylon buckles and accessories, the bag offers plenty of storage space inside its large heavily padded main compartment and multiple zipped and sleeve pockets. Additionally Centurion bag features triple polyurethane water-resistant coating, DuPont Teflon fabric protector and double stitched stress points which ensure grime resistance and easy maintenance. With molded plastic feet studs on the bottom, dual grab handles, and removable and adjustable tactical shoulder slings, the Centurion Patrol Bag is a comfortable and secure storage solution for law enforcement and rescue personnel, but also for musicians or professional photographers.



MAXPEDITION OPERATOR TACTICAL ATTACHE

The Maxpedition #0605 OPERATOR TACTICAL ATTACHE is the perfect go-bag for those who need a lot of storage space. With a huge amount of compartments on show for various different items, you can be sure that you'll have space for everything you need to carry.



WHILST NOT NECESSARILY SUITED TO THE EVERYDAY SITUATION, WE CAN CERTAINLY SEE A RANGE OF WORKMEN AND WOMEN BENEFITTING FOR THIS MONSTER OF A BAG!

MAXPEDITION DOPPELDUFFEL ADVENTURE BAG

The DOPPELDUFFEL ADVENTURE BAG is a unique travel bag that can be carried by hand, by shoulder strap (in 2 orientations), or by it's concealable ergonomic backpack straps. Multiple pockets, pouches, and compartments offer plenty of space and organization, and the main interior is equipped with 2 padded dividers for splitting the main compartment into smaller sections.

Perfect for use as either a bag for the gym or for travelling, we could definitely get a lot of use from the Doppelduffel Adventure Bag!



MAXPEDITION PROTEUS VERSIPACK

A compact version of the #0426 SABERCAT VERSIPACK. Carry it by hand, strap it around your waist, or attach it to your Maxpedition bag. The compact Proteus Versipack is all about options. Named after a mythological character that could take on many shapes and forms, the Proteus has 10 rows of exterior PALS webbing to accommodate modular accessories and comes equipped with compression straps that snap into its integral handle to secure contents. This is a great bag to have when setting forth on your odyssey.



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DIRECT ACTION!

DIRECT ACTION LEADS THIS MONTH WITH THE ARMY'S CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY. GIVEN THE INCREASING ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS WITH BRITAIN'S ARMED FORCES, WE FULLY EXPECTED THE ARMED FORCES TO MARK THE OCCASSION AND WE WEREN'T DISSAPPOINTED! FOCUSING THEIR EFFORTS IN SCOTLAND, THE ARMY DECIDED TO MAKE A REAL NOISE ABOUT IT. EARLIER THIS MONTH THE PRIME MINISTER UNVEILED PAVING STONES DEDICATED TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE VICTORIA CROSS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY GOES OFF WITH A BANG!

Captain Lori Sharp was selected by the Army in Scotland to fire the world famous One o'clock Gun to highlight the celebration of International Women's Day.

The 30-year-old from Cairneyhill, Fife, who attended Queen Anne High School in Dunfermline joined the Army Reserve in 2001 before commissioning into the Regular Army in 2006. She is currently posted as Adjutant of 105th Regiment Royal Artillery and is privileged to live in Edinburgh Castle. Lori has recently returned from a nine month tour of Afghanistan explained:

"It is a great honour to be selected by the Army in Scotland to highlight the celebration of International Women's Day and carry out this wonderful task.

"It's a great honour to be the first female officer in history to fire the One o'clock Gun. International Women's Day is a global celebration of women's achievements. The day also focuses on the continued plight of women and girls in parts of the world where there are abuses of human rights, violence and human trafficking."



"IF THIS DAY CAN MAKE PEOPLE STOP AND THINK ABOUT WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD AND THEIR PLIGHT THEN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WILL BE A WONDERFUL SUCCESS."



CAPTAIN
LORI SHARP

DIRECT ACTION!

MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES UNVEIL



PRIME MINISTER AND SENIOR MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD UNVEIL PAVING STONES FOR WW1 VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS

PRIME MINISTER DAVID CAMERON JOINED COMMUNITIES SECRETARY ERIC PICKLES, SENIOR MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES AND OVERSEAS AND UK DIGNITARIES AT A PAVING STONE UNVEILING CEREMONY AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM HONOURING 145 FOREIGN SERVICEMEN AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

At the ceremony held at the Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, on the 5th March this year, in front of senior military personnel, dignitaries from across the world and families of VC recipients, Mr Cameron invited Sergeant Johnson Beharry, a serving British soldier who won the VC for saving the lives of his fellow servicemen in Iraq, to unveil a title stone at the ceremony.

He said: "Today we write the names of these Victoria Cross Winners into the soil of our land - they may have been born overseas, but they will have a home here for generations to come, in this our National Memorial Arboretum - these men are heroes among heroes - their legacy is our liberty their courage is our inspiration, and their friendship is a gift that we will treasure forever."





"TODAY WE WRITE THE NAMES OF THESE VICTORIA CROSS WINNERS INTO THE SOIL OF OUR LAND..."

SECOND SEA LORD SUPERSESSION

ENGINEERING THE NAVY'S FUTURE





THE ROYAL NAVY FORMALLY WELCOMED A NEW SECOND SEA LORD TODAY (10 MAR) WHEN VICE ADMIRAL JONATHAN WOODCOCK TOOK OVER THE ROLE IN A CEREMONY IN HMS VICTORY IN PORTSMOUTH, WHICH ALSO MARKS HIS APPOINTMENT AS ADMIRAL-IN-CHARGE HMS VICTORY.

Admiral Woodcock, 52, is the first Marine Engineer to be appointed as Second Sea Lord and will bring both engineering and personnel experience to the role.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, and the United States Navy Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Michelle Howard, attended the supersession, which was held in Nelson's Great Cabin and the quarterdeck.

Admiral Woodcock said: "I am delighted to take over as Second Sea Lord at such an exciting time for the Royal Navy. We have some amazing things happening - new ships and submarines - a complete new aircraft fleet, and some serious modernisation of existing equipment going on. We will make the most of it."

The Admiral added: "Today is perhaps the most exciting, thrilling and humbling day of my Naval Career, I have been entrusted with one of the most significant roles in the Navy I love, the Navy I have served in for 34 years and the Navy which is the benchmark for all others."



Although the title of Second Sea Lord is nearly as old as Nelson's flagship, the job demands the most up-to-date and innovative thinking in order to meet the needs of a 21st century Royal Navy.

Historically the Second Sea Lord has been the Navy's Principal Personnel Officer, but Admiral Woodcock will also be responsible for the Navy's Strategic headquarters and for generating the people and equipment to run the Royal Navy at a time of massive change and investment.

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The 92F BLACK from umarex is a replica of the Beretta m92f semi automatic pistol. This high quality air pistol features a double action trigger and has outstanding build quality. This air pistol features an 8 shot rotary magazine which is loaded into the top of the pistol and uses CO2 capsules.



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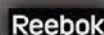
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